



**DESIRE**  
Demand  
for Sexual  
Exploitation  
In Europe

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## **D3.2: Understanding demand for sexual services, human trafficking for sexual exploitation and existing law and policies in three European countries (Croatia, The Netherlands and Poland)**

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## Change Records

Issue	Author	Date	Reason for change
0.1	Margo de Koster (VUB)	23 April 2018	Circulation of country report template and coding tree
0.2	FLIGHT	14 May 2018	Submission of Croatian quantitative data set
0.3	Ana Opačić, Iva Jovović, Marko Miklin, Denis Ježdik, Hana Kutil [FLIGHT]	16 June 2018	Submission of Croatian country report: qualitative data
0.4	Zbigniew Lasocik, Kamila Rejmer-Jobczyk and Lukasz Wieczorek [UW]	5 July 2018	Submission of Polish country report: qualitative and quantitative data set
0.5	Floris de Meijer, Maria Shaidrova, Robin Kuijken, Jaap Nieuwland, Conny Rijken [TIU]	9, 17, 19 July 2018	Submission of Dutch country report: qualitative data
0.6	TIU	19 July 2018	Submission of Dutch quantitative data set
0.7	Wanjiku Kaime-Atterhög, Naa Adukwie Allotey [UU]	31 July, 11 August 2018	Submission of Swedish country report: qualitative and survey report
0.8	Margo de Koster (VUB)	4 September 2018	Circulation of draft 1 of comparative report to partners for review and feedback
0.9	TIU, UW	18 September 2018	Submission of feedback from Tilburg University and University of Warsaw
0.10	UU	20 September 2018	Withdrawal of Swedish national data
0.11	Margo de Koster, Elisabeth Enhus, Amy Weatherburn (VUB)	21 September 2018 -	Revision of draft comparative report (without Swedish data) & inclusion of quantitative data
0.12	Margo de Koster (VUB)	18 October 2018	Circulation of draft 2 of comparative report to partners for review and feedback
0.13	TIU, FLIGHT, UW	2 November 2018	Submission of feedback to draft 2 from TIU, FLIGHT and UW
0.14	Dr Rosemary Broad (University of Manchester)	9-23 November 2018	Review of comparative report (draft 3) by external reviewer
0.15	Amy Weatherburn, Margo de Koster (VUB)	23 November 2018	Updated version (draft 4) following external review
0.16	Amy Weatherburn (VUB)	3 December 2018	Submission to PO following final circulation to partners (draft 5)

## 1. Executive summary

Sex work and its relationship to human trafficking is a contested issue. The desktop research in the project so far has demonstrated that, in the EU, different approaches to sex work coexist, each with national particularities.<sup>1</sup> Scholars and policy makers disagree on which approach to take, and even whether a relationship exists between legislation and policy on sex work and trafficking in human beings. Despite some advancement, currently too few rigorous studies have been undertaken to be able to draw definitive conclusions.

This project aims to fill this gap by generating a better understanding of the impact of different approaches to sex work legislation and policies on the prevalence of trafficking in human beings. DESIRE is particularly focused on varying approaches in different countries: Croatia, The Netherlands and Poland. In brief, the Netherlands legalise sex work. In Croatia the sex workers are criminalised. In Poland the approach is somewhere in between.

The current report is the culmination of fieldwork and an online survey (see section 2 on methodology, research design and data collection) undertaken in three countries: Croatia, The Netherlands and Poland with five target groups, i) persons selling sex, ii) persons buying sex, iii) victims of human trafficking, iv) policy makers, law enforcement and civil society and v) the general public, in order to determine:

- the understanding of and attitudes towards sex work (section 3);
- the understanding of sexual exploitation and the awareness of human trafficking for the purpose of exploitation (section 4) and;
- the knowledge and awareness of law and policy that seeks to regulate the sex industry, and which also may be used to prevent human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation (section 5).

The report concludes that:

Attitudes towards sex work are varied and complex, not only across countries, but also within different groups within the same country. An acceptance of individual freedom and choice was clearly highly valued in the three countries: this manifested itself in relatively high public support for the legal protection of the rights of persons selling sex and very low public support for legal measures that criminalise the buying and selling of sex. However, a certain ambivalence emerged whereby a 'not in my backyard attitude' led to a certain 'public hypocrisy' whereby the apparent characteristics of personal tolerance did not translate to overall acceptance of sex work.

The link between sex work and the possibility of experiencing violence and exploitation was raised in all three countries. Interviewees in the three countries associated sexual exploitation with coercion, physical abuse and financial and labour exploitation. Among the general public, many respondents in the three countries, thought that sex work often or sometimes involves sexual exploitation. Persons buying sex were not viewed as the main source of exploitation, rather pimps and facilitators – who in some instances were seen as adopting a protective role

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<sup>1</sup> DESIRE Deliverable, Report on the legal and regulatory approaches towards sex work in four EU-countries (June 2017), available at: <http://project-desire.eu/report-on-the-legal-and-regulatory-approaches-towards-sex-work-in-four-eu-countries-2/>.

- were more often identified as sources of danger and exploitation employing strategies of romantic involvement and the promise of a better life.

New forms and trends in the sex industry identified included the shift of the sex industry online and underground. Some suggested that changes to policy regulating more visible forms of the sex industry has created an economic imperative of persons selling sex to shift underground. Ultimately, these changes increased the vulnerability of those involved, due to a policy gap where public authorities could not regulate the provision of sexual services leading to less safety and protection of persons selling sex.

Safety and protection of persons selling sex was, however, identified as key priorities by all groups of interviewees in all countries. Respondents tended to assign an important role to the authorities in providing assistance and protection to persons selling sex who are in need or who want to exit. Among the general public, however, opinions differed regarding the question of whether the authorities should provide safety for people that want to sell and buy sex.

Conclusions on the effects of legislation and policy towards the perception of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation were difficult to make due to a limited connection between sex work and human trafficking for sexual exploitation emerging from the data. As a result, when proposing means to prevent human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, respondents did not identify the reduction of demand for sexual services as a priority strategy. Nevertheless, the major preventive measures identified can be adopted for both sexual exploitation and human trafficking, namely: 1) increased legal protection of (the labour conditions of) persons selling sex; 2) increased accessibility of (protection by) the authorities; 3) strong and targeted judicial action against exploiters and traffickers and the sectors of organised crime in which they operate and 4) various alternatives to legislation and policy.

## **2. Introduction: research design**

### **2.1. Methodology**

A mixed methods research design was adopted with qualitative methodology being the predominant methodology and the use of quantitative methods being embedded into the overall qualitative methodology. An embedded design was adopted in order to reach the objective of the fieldwork: to generate a better understanding of the relationship between legislation and policy approaches to sex work and trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation. The added value of the embedded qualitative analysis enabled the project to pursue the question of how policies on prostitution and sexual exploitation are understood and viewed by the general public. The findings of this analysis enable a better understanding of the attitudes and views of the general public to prostitution and sexual exploitation and how it relates to the national policies in their countries. It provided an additional insight into the reason for the adoption of certain kinds of policies for certain countries.

Since the topic of the fieldwork is sensitive and some of the target groups were hidden, the fieldwork initially adopted participatory methods for engaging with research participants (see

section 2.6 for engagement with participants) and developing the research materials.<sup>2</sup> The added value of such an approach provided the researchers with a holistic view of the participants in the research as it saw individuals in their social contexts and allowed the research agenda to be shaped by both the researcher and the researched.

From January to July 2018, the country teams collected the qualitative data using a number of methods: participatory workshops with stakeholders; face to face semi-structured interviews and participant observation (see section 2.6. for more information on data collection). Initial analysis of the country data led to the drafting of four individual country reports.<sup>3</sup> Country reports of the qualitative data were submitted to the VUB team who drafted a comparative report.<sup>4</sup> In addition, an online survey was carried out with members of the public between April and July 2018. The full quantitative data sets of Croatia, the Netherlands and Poland were submitted to the VUB for comparative data analysis. The Swedish team submitted a report summarising the quantitative data. The current report is the result of comparative analysis of the interviews and survey data from Croatia, the Netherlands and Poland, based on the objectives of the study, as operationalized by the research questions, and the objectives of the law and policy then the implementation of the policy was evaluated based on the data collected, in order to identify the intended and unintended observed effects within the context of those models.

## **2.2. Research aims and objectives**

The aim of the fieldwork and the survey was to provide an up-to-date understanding of the views of citizens, victims of human trafficking, persons selling sex, persons buying sex and law enforcement officials/policy makers/civil society organisations regarding the relationship between policy and demand for sexual services, which fuels human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The main research objectives sought to assess the relationship between the legislation and policy model in Croatia, The Netherlands, Poland and Sweden on sex-work and trafficking in human beings.

In order to further investigate this research objective, a number of sub-research questions were developed:

- What are the attitudes towards sex work in Croatia, The Netherlands, Poland and Sweden? (see section 3.1)
- What are the new forms and trends in the sex-industry in Croatia, The Netherlands, Poland and Sweden? (new services, channels, etc) (see section 3.2)
- Does the law and policy model in Croatia, The Netherlands, Poland and Sweden effectively ensure the protection of sex-workers and make them feel safe? What specific measures and actions make them/would make them feel safe when selling sex

<sup>2</sup>Research materials include: Research design, methodology briefs, information sheets, interview guides for each target group, consent forms, reporting templates, quantitative survey coding tree and training brief for researchers interviewing vulnerable persons in a criminalised context.

<sup>3</sup> Croatian team: Ana Opačić, Iva Jovović, Marko Miklin, Denis Ježdik, Hana Kutil; Polish team: Zbigniew Lasocik, Kamila Rejmer-Jobczyk and Lukasz Wieczorek; Dutch team: Floris de Meijer, Maria Shaidrova, Robin Kuijken, Jaap Nieuwland, Conny Rijken; Swedish team: Wanjiku Kaime-Atterhög, Naa Adukwei Allotey, nine core-stakeholders (N, Z, A, S, H, M, Ma, P, U) and 4 insiders (G, N, G, A-M).

<sup>4</sup> The Swedish qualitative data set was withdrawn on 20 September 2018 – see section 2.3.



(e.g. access to health care, protection from violence – including sexual violence, safe reporting, exit programmes)? (see section 3.3 and section 5.4)

- How do the target groups understand sexual exploitation in Croatia, The Netherlands, Poland and Sweden? (see section 4.1)
- Which exploitative strategies are used by persons buying sex and facilitators? (see section 4.3)
- How to reduce the demand for sexual services since that demand may fuel human trafficking for sexual purposes (see section 5.4.)
- What are the effects of legislation and policy on the perception of human trafficking for sexual exploitation? (see section 5.2)
- How can sexual exploitation be reduced by legislation and policy in the context of different regulatory regimes? (see sections 5.3 and 5.4.)

### **2.3. Non-inclusion of Swedish data**

This comparative report is based on country reports drafted by national teams in Croatia, The Netherlands and Poland. The first draft of the national report, submitted to the VUB by the Swedish team, was based on both qualitative and quantitative data. It was withdrawn after stakeholders and target groups that were interviewed withdrew their consent.

### **2.4. Limitations of research**

Considering the research aims and objectives, a number of limitations must be highlighted. The principal limitation is that the fieldwork research design was not conducive to measuring an impact of the legal and policy regulation of sex work on the prevention of human trafficking, as it was difficult to determine a concrete effect of regulatory approaches to the sex industry on the prevention of human trafficking. Therefore, the added value of the current research was the examination and evaluation of the effect and influence of law and policy models on individuals. However, it was possible, based on the above research questions to increase better understanding: i) demand for sexual services; ii) the link between the provision of sexual services and sexual exploitation and iii) human trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, which in turn has facilitated the consideration of further legal and policy measures that could be used to prevent such exploitation from occurring.

A number of further limitations emerged throughout the research:

The bias of identification of research participants such as persons selling sex and victims of human trafficking, via specific channels such as gatekeeper organisations or already existing contacts could have resulted in a potentially unrepresentative target group as a whole. For example, in Croatia, all persons selling sex interviewed sold sex on the streets, which means that other milieus were not included in the findings.

In all countries, the number of victims of trafficking interviewed was very low, due to difficulties in identifying victims and motivating them to cooperate in the research. It should of course be emphasised that it is not because the DESIRE researchers did not manage to reach many



victims that there are none. Nevertheless, the low numbers of the victims of trafficking represented in the research means that any findings in relation to this target group must be treated with caution.

From the research, it was clear that the target groups, when discussing law and policy, did not always lead to the emergence of extensive findings specifically related to human trafficking and how regulatory regimes can contribute to prevention. Instead the prominent focus on sex work, does not allow the discussion to move beyond sex work in order to capture the structural processes that could make persons vulnerable to trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. As such, the project partners must be wary of this position when drawing conclusions and making recommendations as to the “impact” of sex work legislation and policies on the prevalence of human trafficking.

## **2.5. Samples of survey respondents (general public, G) and interviewed victims (V), persons selling sex (SW), persons buying sex (B) and policy-civil society-law enforcement (P, C& L)**

In total there were five target groups: the i) general public (G); ii) persons buying sex (B); iii) persons selling sex (SW); iv) victims of human trafficking (V) and v) professional stakeholders who engage with this issue including policy officials (P), civil society (C) and law enforcement (L). The following table provides an overview of the breakdown of the pre-set sample size for target groups in each case study country.

*Table 1: Breakdown of the pre-set sample size for target groups in each case study country*

	<b>General public (G)</b>	<b>Persons buying sex (B)</b>	<b>Persons selling sex (SW)</b>	<b>Victims of human trafficking (V)</b>	<b>Law Enforcement (L)</b>	<b>Civil Society (C)</b>	<b>Policy Officials (P)</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Croatia (HR)</b>	385	30	15	15	10	10	10	<b>140</b>
<b>Poland (PL)</b>	385	30	15	15	10	10	10	<b>140</b>
<b>The Netherlands (NL)</b>	385	30	15	15	10	10	10	<b>140</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1155</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	

### **2.5.1. Number of survey respondents in each case study country**

*Table 2: Sample size calculation and obtained sample for the General Public (G) target group*

Country	Population (million)	Margin of error	Confidence level	Required sample	Actual sample size
Croatia	4,171	5%	95%	385	385
The Netherlands	17,02	5%	95%	385	404
Poland	37,95	5%	95%	385	641
<b>Total</b>					1430

For further details regarding the socio-demographic composition of the samples of survey respondents in the different countries, see section 2.5.7. Background general public.

### 2.5.2. Number of interviewees by age group and gender in each case study country

The following outlines the sample size of interviewees achieved in each country, according to age group and gender. Overall, it was envisaged to ensure as diverse groups as possible, with a good representation of gender and age groups. However, in this area of work, women are overrepresented and, thus, more women than men have been interviewed, except for persons buying sex, who are predominantly male. Project partners also observed gender bias in other target groups including policy makers, law enforcement officers and NGO staff: in the Netherlands, these stakeholders are predominantly female. In Croatia, NGO workers are mostly female, but law enforcement officers are mostly male. The Croatian team tried to obtain a 50-50 ratio within all three target groups (P-L-C).

#### CROATIA

	14-17y		18-30y		31-40y		41-50y		51-65y		>65y		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
<b>V</b>													<b>0</b>
<b>SW</b>				2		5		6		2			<b>15</b>
<b>B</b>			4		11		11		4				<b>30</b>
<b>P-L-C</b>			2	1	3	5	8	5	4	2			<b>30</b>

#### THE NETHERLANDS

	14-17y		18-30y		31-40y		41-50y		51-65y		>65y		Not available	Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F			
<b>V</b>				1				1						<b>2</b>	
<b>SW</b>			1	3		5		2	1				6	<b>19</b>	
<b>B</b>			5		3		3		4				3	<b>18</b>	
<b>P</b>													6	6	<b>24</b>
<b>C</b>													12	12	
<b>L</b>													3	3	

<b>OE<sup>1</sup></b>														3	3	
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<sup>1</sup> Other experts : academics / researchers

## POLAND

**Note:** For the purpose of this report, the UW team also used the statements of 9 persons buying sex (not included in the table below) on a Polish online forum for persons buying sex and persons selling sex (see section 2.5.5. on reaching persons buying sex and Annex 7.3. 'Record of discussions between the University of Warsaw Team and forum members of an online forum regarding participation in the DESIrE research').

	14-17y		18-30y		31-40y		41-50y		51-65y		>65y		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
<b>V</b>				2									<b>2</b>
<b>SW</b>				5		5		3		2			<b>15</b>
<b>B</b>			4		3		1				1		<b>9</b>
<b>P</b>			1				3			1			5
<b>C</b>						5	2	2					9
<b>L</b>					3	1	2	2					8
<b>OE<sup>1</sup></b>						2	1	1					4
													<b>26</b>

<sup>1</sup> Other experts: a psycho-therapist, a sexologist, a photographer preparing photos for persons selling sex, and a maker of documentary films about sex and sexuality of teenagers.

### 2.5.3. Victims of human trafficking: background information

The fieldwork of the DESIrE project showed that the victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation were a particularly hard-to-reach group. In the process of data collection, only four trafficking victims were identified and interviewed in total. Two were in Poland and two in the Netherlands. The Croatian team could not access any victims of trafficking. These low numbers are representative of the difficulties reaching this target group, which will be further explained in the section on the execution of the fieldwork.

All four victims interviewed were females, were mostly single and aged between 20 and 35 years old. Their life stories vary but some patterns emerged. The most prominent one was the high social vulnerability.<sup>5</sup> Of the victims interviewed some came from broken and/or violent family situations (absent/violent father). Two were undocumented migrants coming from Eastern Europe and Africa. Two had children to care for, but lacked support networks and/or shelter, leaving them homeless. A noticeable difference among these interviewees, however, was their varying level of education, ranging from primary education to university degrees.

Pathways to becoming victims of trafficking in human beings were very diverse. One victim in the Polish context was already active in the sex industry, providing sexual services voluntarily

<sup>5</sup>Cf. the theoretical context of vulnerability as developed in DESIrE Deliverable No. 1.4: "Report on Demand for Sexual Services that can fuel Sexual Exploitation in the Context of Human Trafficking", p. 20-21, Figure 4.

to improve her financial situation. The descent into coercion, exploitation and then trafficking started from there: she declared that her so called 'friends' enslaved and exploited her and forced her to have unprotected sex, without being able to choose the clients. Drugs were administered to her and she heard that she was being prepared to be exported abroad.

Other victims were initially not aware that they would end up in the sex industry. The second victim interviewed in Poland was recruited by a trafficker while looking to be recruited for employment. One of the Dutch victims, of Ukrainian origin, was proposed a job in the Netherlands by a friend working as a sex worker in Amsterdam, but she also did not know that her job was going to be in the sex industry: she was told that she could sell flowers, work with children, or as a cleaner. This friend helped her to get off the streets, after having been homeless for 10 years, arranged her trip and paid all the expenses. The victim was kept for a month at a Polish farm and then brought to the Netherlands by Ukrainian and Polish facilitators. After some time, she managed to escape from the exploitation by these facilitators but entered exploitative relationships with a Dutch pimp and later a boyfriend.

The other victim interviewed in the Netherlands, originally from Uganda, was not looking for employment but was rather escaping her home country: as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, she had been arrested and thrown in jail without a trial where she was assaulted and raped by the policemen. She was broken out of jail by her girlfriend who had paid off one of the guards. With a visa obtained via someone from the German embassy in Uganda, she and her girlfriend went to Kenya to fly to Europe. She took the plane together with another friend, while her girlfriend stayed back, and upon arrival at the airport (the victim is unsure whether it was in the Netherlands or Germany), they got into a car where she was drugged. She was kept in a small room and was continuously abused by men. She knew there were other persons/women in other rooms because she heard them screaming. After about a month, she was so ill that the woman in the house said that she would be taken to a hospital. Instead, they blindfolded and abandoned her in a parking lot. When she realised that her exploiters would not return and that she could escape, she sought the help of a man passing by, who was able to convince her finally to contact the police, who immediately took her to a shelter.

Interestingly, both the victims who were lured into the sex industry by deception of the promise of a 'normal' job (one in Poland, one in the Netherlands, as mentioned above) declared having been aware of the risks but saw no other option but to take the risk. The Polish victim reported that she looked for jobs on the internet and got many offers of sponsorship or sexual services. As she did not want to work in this sector, she further specified in job announcements that she did not want such offers. In the end, she found a job offer in London. She did not know the language but decided to take the risk because her financial situation was very bad. Similarly, the Ukrainian victim in the Netherlands stated: *"I knew many girls are in the dangerous situation today. I knew that they were brought to another country for prostitution and I was very afraid of that. I was never thinking that it can happen to me, because a lot of people when I was homeless introduced (invited) me to go to Moscow, Poland, Germany, to Italy, to Brazil, to Portugal, to many countries to just go. They told me I do not have to be a prostitute but work in sauna with massage and blablabla. I was always saying no, thank you"* (NL-V1).

The victims' ways out of their respective situations of sexual exploitation were also varied: they received help from different actors, ranging from a private person (a buyer), a charity initiative, NGOs to the police. Three of the four victims interviewed obtained the official status of victim of trafficking, which gave them the possibility to get a residence permit. One of them, in the Dutch context, did not have the official status. This victim pressed charges leading to a court case, but the police found the evidence insufficient and so the case was rejected and is now closed.

#### **2.5.4. Persons selling sex: background information**

##### **2.5.4.1. Various pathways, activities, experiences**

In all countries, the group of persons selling sex was the most varied in terms of type of prostitution (window prostitution, escort agencies, erotic massage, male prostitution, sponsored relationships, 'housing' (sex at home), street and roadside prostitution), in terms of geographical origin, and residence status (undocumented migrants; established immigrants speaking the country's language; native residents). There were also considerable variations in terms of age (from young adults to people in their seventies), marital status (married and single) as well as education (elementary to university level). There were also transgender persons and members of the male gay community, but most of the interviewed persons selling sex were female. In the Netherlands, by using gay chats and online forums the researchers managed to interview males selling sex as well.

The geographical background was very diverse. From the background information of the persons selling sex, a link with intra-EU migration could be ascertained as migrants selling sex often came from the EU and its surrounding countries. In Poland, several persons selling sex came from bordering countries, such as Ukraine, but they also noted the large presence of Bulgarians in their sex industry. Notwithstanding, migrants selling sex interviewed also originated from South-America (the Netherlands).

When it comes to the pathways of persons selling sex into the sex industry, whilst some persons selling sex willingly chose to enter the sex industry, for others, a precarious socio-economic position led to them entering the sex industry. On top of this, some also needed money to buy drugs, while others were without shelter after leaving residential care or leaving home and a violent partner. Several persons selling sex had escaped situations of violence and abuse. One of the Polish respondents described her marriage as follows: *"I was my husband's slut, I let him use me and that was all just so he wouldn't go somewhere else. It was worse than what I am doing now"* (PL-SW09). In many cases, persuasion by a close person also played a role: most often, persons selling sex entered via relatives or friends who were already in the business, or via a partner. For the large majority, sex work was the key source of income; for others it was an additional source.

There were also important differences among the persons selling sex depending on whether they did window/street prostitution on the one hand, or provided escort services, webcam modelling or erotic massage on the other. In the Netherlands, call girls and escorts were all ethnic Dutch, with different life experiences and motivations, and different self-perceptions (see section below). Newcomers and undocumented migrants, on the other hand, were largely found on the streets (or roads, in Poland), in the windows and in the illegal home prostitution

sector (the Netherlands). In the Netherlands, the male sex work milieu had its own specificities. More research is needed on the S&M gay scene in particular because it knows its own forms of consensual violence that can, however, sometimes move beyond the initially arranged limitations.<sup>6</sup>

A noticeable feature that came out of the interviews with persons selling sex was that alcohol or drug dependence were rarely mentioned and admitted explicitly, but they transpired in some accounts of persons selling sex (on health issues following extreme weight loss, for example), and they were mentioned by experts and persons buying sex (for example NL-B2 and NL-B8 regarding window prostitution in Eindhoven).

#### **2.5.4.2. Agency of persons selling sex: self-representation and resisting stigma**

An important advantage of the choice for qualitative research, and semi-structured interviews in particular, was that this method allowed the researchers to get a sense of how persons selling sex presented themselves, how they strived to be perceived and how they insisted on their agency in the interviews. Project partners provided multiple instances of resistance to labelling as either victims or deviants. Often, this importance placed on their agency was more poignant in native-born respondents than in the ones from an immigration background.

One ethnic Dutch escort sex worker explicitly stated that she refuses to be seen as a victim: *“Sex workers are labelled as “victims” and are therefore silenced. Laws intended to combat human trafficking are being misused to ‘hunt whores’”* (NL-SW13).

Others also asserted their independence, self-control, self-defence, and so on. Polish persons selling sex who worked alone, for example, put a lot of emphasis on the selection of their persons buying sex and claimed that they were able to make this selection on the basis of a single telephone conversation. They say that they had no problems with persons buying sex, nor with requests for extra services. They said that it was enough for them to be assertive. A few girls declared that in the interests of their safety and self-development they were training in martial arts or self-defence. Some persons selling sex who had previously worked in an escort agency and now worked independently state their freedom of choice has increased. In the agency, they could only refuse an aggressive person or under the influence of psychoactive substances, and they had to accept more persons buying sex for less pay. Other persons selling sex who were working in agencies, on the other hand, mentioned the advantages of not having to worry about advertising, shopping, telephones. They come to a suitably prepared place, they do what they need to do, and they go back home. They declared that such a solution is convenient for them. It was much more difficult to know the opinions and experiences of persons selling sex who provided sexual services on the street. They did not want to reveal too much or did not understand the questions. One woman of Bulgarian origin claimed that she had already worked in several European countries but that in Poland, she works and lives the best.

<sup>6</sup> Such consensual exploitation happens in the context of domination and role-playing games, as one male sex worker explained: *“Completely consensual. But sometimes, the game that is played is exploitation”* (NL-SW6).



In all countries there were persons selling sex who resisted labels of deviance and stigma by emphasising that the sex industry was a normal occupation. Several Dutch persons selling sex in the windows or as escorts did not refer to their occupation as prostitution but rather called it “*work behind the windows*” (NL-SW10), “*this job*” (NL-SW1), “*a normal job*” (NL-SW18). Further, persons selling sex also stressed the ‘normality’ of their activities by mentioning that it was, and had always been, an inevitable part of society and the ‘oldest profession’. Polish persons selling sex, for example, declared that “*it has always been and will be and nothing can change this*” (PL-SW4, and similar: PL- SW8, PL- SW10, PL-E2). In Croatia, persons selling sex also referred to the provision of sexual services as a form of employment: “*Sex work is a job. You have a client or more of them and you sleep with them for the money you get for that*” (HR-SW7), “*[It is a] business like any other. Unfortunately, it is not legalized*” (HR-SW2) and “*This is the way someone earns a living*” (HR-SW15).

Some Polish and Dutch persons selling sex as escorts, webcam models, in erotic massage or ‘sponsoring’, resisted negative labelling by stressing that sex work brings them opportunities for self-fulfilment and certain forms of pleasure. Some indicated that the income gained through sex work allowed them to finance their studies, or a passion for painting (Poland), for example, while others saw it as a way to meet new people, explore the world, and at the same time earn good money and enjoy some luxury: “*money, adventures, night life, champagne*” (NL-SW13). In Poland, respondents active in erotic massage or ‘sponsoring’ indicated that they treated this in a spiritual way (PL- SW01, PL-SW02, PL-SW13, PL-SW15).

*“I worked at the beginning as a usual masseuse, but later I’ve got interested in something else. I’ve started to explore Eastern culture and that’s why I found tantra. I started to exercise a bit. Later I also went to various tantric teachers and I saw the major effects of change and I thought I could also help other people. Because it is a really great way to change your perception of yourself and your sexuality. This is healthier approach than the one present in Poland. We (tantric masseuse) are trying to expand this approach between people. And so I became a sex worker”* (PL-SW02).

*“I am practising an erotic massage. The topic came from the fact that I always loved massaging and it’s something that has been in my life practically since childhood. It was not an abstract idea, it came with genuine interest. However, this classic massage just bores me. I have very erotic, sensual nature that’s where I naturally flowed in this direction. At some point in my life there was a circumstance that gave me the opportunity to try such work abroad. It turned out that I love this work, because erotic massage is a great balancing on the verge of erotica and sex, but this border does not exceed. It perfectly fulfils itself with my personality”* (PL-SW15).

The research findings derived from the fieldwork in an online gay chat room targeting specifically “domination” male sex work (oriented on male clients) illustrated that persons selling sex use certain labels to attract clients, for instance, such labels as ‘slave’ and ‘sissy’. Since this sector is inherently commodifying, first of all as a part of the role game itself, the way persons selling sex presented themselves differed significantly from the other traditional sectors. It was quite common for the males selling sex to be active on the website to “rent” themselves out or propose temporary “enslavement”. Consequently, where the representatives of more traditional sectors referred to themselves rather as service providers,



BDSM males selling sex might operate within the sex industry in more commodifying ways. More research is needed to fully understand the dynamics of the self-perception and identity construction among males selling sex who target BDSM clients specifically.

All project partners agreed that the voices and opinions of persons selling sex have brought great added value to the DESIRE research. When the research started, all partners encountered a large group of sceptics who claimed that, apart from experts, nobody would want to talk to about sex work. For the Polish team, for example, the most important finding of their research for the specific Polish context was that it has proven to be possible to talk about prostitution with both persons selling sex and persons buying sex. Moreover, the Polish team believe that most persons selling sex have demonstrated very good knowledge of their rights when it comes to reporting alleged abuse by pimps, such as extortion and awareness of the dangers resulting from the profession, both interpersonal and those of a medical nature. Many opinions formulated by these women have proven that the issue of the proper functioning of the sex industry in Poland is important to them. The Polish team also observed that the persons selling sex, when discussing the current policy and legal framework regulating sex work in Poland, showed a higher level of openness and creativity than other target groups including professional stakeholders. After they decided to take part the research project, the persons selling sex seized this opportunity to share their views openly. In most of the cases, such views were indicative of self-confidence and self-respect among the women active in the sex industry. Thus, the research has shown that much can be learned from the voices and opinions of the persons selling sex.

#### **2.5.5. Persons buying sex: background information**

This was also a difficult to reach group (see below, 'execution of the data collection'). These interviewees were almost exclusively male. It was a relatively closed group, so there was not much information available about their backgrounds. Among the persons buying sex interviewed in the different countries, some indicated that they buy sex to compensate (their lack of sex, loneliness, or monotonous jobs) or out of hedonism (new encounters, adventure, sexual needs). For example, in all the countries there were respondents who reported that 'normal' romantic relationships did not go well for them. However, in their opinion, "a man needs sex", so they had recourse to sex services. They stressed the benefits from having a sexual relationship and obtaining sexual gratification without any emotional commitment, or as a Croatian buyer put it: *"For many unhappy people it is like a valve. Benefit is mutual"* (HR-B16). On the other hand, other persons buying sex, again in all the countries, took a very different stance, talking about needs that were not in the first place sexual. They indicated that apart from sex, they were also looking for affection and a girlfriend experience, so they always returned to the same women who provided sexual services. As one Dutch client explained: *"You don't just have sex. But you also have conversation with someone. And that woman that has been visiting me for 7 years now also says that. There are men that just lie against her for half an hour. Because their wife at home doesn't want to do that. Yes, and that is what they come for"* (NL-B2). In Poland, one buyer stated that: *"Every man needs a bit of tenderness and intimacy. And in my situation it is very difficult because I am a physical disabled person. For this reason and it is definitely harder for me to establish a partnership relationship."* (PL-B3).

Overall, in all the countries, only a few persons buying sex mentioned specific preferences or demands regarding persons selling sex and the sexual services they offered, suggesting that the large majority either did not have particular demands or were not willing to disclose such information. The preferences of those who did share them with the researchers did not show a clear and distinct pattern either. Most Polish persons buying sex, for example, declared paying attention to the level of personal hygiene of the sex worker and preferred to meet with women of the same nationality. One Dutch buyer emphasised that he expects a certain level of enjoyment by the sex worker. Overall, however, both the characteristics of the sex worker (physical appearance, ethnicity, etc.) and the types of sexual activities that persons buying sex demand, were matters of individual preference of each buyer.

In the Netherlands, only one of the persons buying sex interviewed openly expressed his preference for sexual contact with heterosexual men, being gay himself: *“Another advantage of prostitution is that it puts us older gays in a position to have sex with some young meat (...) Now and then even a heterosexual boy in desperate need for money. I have had this on multiple occasions”* (NL-B18). In Poland, some persons buying sex (PL-B3, PL-B6, PL-B7, PL-B8) declared that they only use the services of Polish women. Only one of the persons buying sex declared that he preferred women of different origin (PL-B5), and yet another said that the nationality of the sex worker did not matter to him (PL-B2).

#### **2.5.6. Experts: background information**

In all countries, a broad range of experts with varied functions and activities were interviewed. This group included various levels of policy-making and of the police and criminal justice system, as well as various types of services providers, such as social workers, outreach workers, caregivers, counsellors, health professionals, charity organisations, etc. Moreover, via the method of snowball-sampling and referral (see section 2.6. data collection), additional experts or key persons were included, such as academics, former persons selling sex, caregivers, artists. All the experts interviewed were experienced, many being active in the field for at least 15 years.

Below are the details per country on the experts-stakeholders’ occupations and sectors of activity. This information is partly anonymised, depending on the wish of stakeholders (see section 2.6.6).

#### **CROATIA**

The Croatian team interviewed 30 representatives of different stakeholders: 10 policy makers, 10 from law enforcement, and 10 from civil society organisations. Respondents were experienced in their field practice having in average 20.62 years of professional experience. The structure of their job placement was as follows:

##### *Croatia: Structure of the stakeholders’ sample*

Group	Sector	Position
Policy makers	Ministry of Justice: 4	Head of the department: 7

	Health: 2 Governmental body: 2 Social welfare: 2	Professional worker: 3
Law enforcement	Ministry of the Interior- police department : 10	Head of the department: 3 Police officer: 7
NGO representatives	Different vulnerable groups and counselling: 5 Family violence issues: 2 Youth work: 1 Human rights organisation: 1 Work with prisoners: 1	

### THE NETHERLANDS

The Dutch team carried out twenty-four interviews in total with policy makers, service providers, academics and law enforcement authorities. Policy makers were defined as people who have had a direct impact on the sex work policy in the country (e.g., municipality officials, international NGOs who issue policy briefs and participating in discussions). Since sometimes, academics did not have such a direct influence on the sex work policy, the Dutch team decided to make a separate category within the sample. Consequently, the following is a breakdown of the sample: Policy makers: N=6; Police: N=3; Academics/researchers: N=3; Service providers: N=12.

Academics / researchers	3
Human rights activists	1+1 (informal)
Representatives of policy-making NGOs	3
Outreach workers	1
Social workers incl. care coordinators	9
Health professionals	1
Municipality workers	2
Law enforcement	3

### POLAND

#### 1. Law enforcement:

Three Border Guard officers (coordination for trafficking in human beings), three Police officers (Human trafficking unit), Prosecutor, Court Judge - expert on human trafficking.

#### 2. Policy makers:

Local City Council (small city in the south of Poland), Senate Member, City Hall Directorate (city in the western part of Poland).

### 3. Non-Governmental Organisations:

Employees Foundation for victims of human trafficking, representatives of the sex workers coalition in Poland, volunteer of the HIV / AIDS prevention foundation, employee of the foundation dealing with the victims of trafficking, a member of the social AIDS committee, employee of the Protestant formation providing help to homeless people and victims of human trafficking, Professor working in the Department within the Ministry of Interior, Director of the Voivodship Office, an employee of the human rights organisation, cooperating with Amnesty International in the field of integration of foreigners

### 4. Independent experts:

A photographer taking pictures of internet advertisements related to sexual work, a therapist dealing with the help of a trafficking victim for sexual exploitation, a therapist-sexologist dealing with his laborious forms of sexual violence, a former erotic dancer and sex educator running a television show.

#### **2.5.7. General public: background information**

The gender division was similar in all countries' samples of survey respondents: 47-48% male versus 52-53% female. Regarding the age structure, all countries had a substantial presence of persons older than 50: 57% in the Netherlands (and 30,7% were older than 65), 47% in Croatia, 44% in Poland. This was quite remarkable, because one might have thought that older population groups were harder to reach for participation in an online survey. In the Netherlands, there was a slight overrepresentation of older women. For Poland, a particularity was that 42% of survey respondents were in the younger age group up to 40 (versus 35% in Croatia and 28% in the Netherlands). The group of 41 to 50 years old was comparable in the three countries. Overall, however, the differences between age and age-gender categories in countries were very small ( $X^2$  is significant but the uncertainty coefficient points at very little relationship between age - gender and countries), so despite certain particularities per country (such as the greater presence younger respondents in Poland), age structure and gender appeared to be only slightly responsible for explaining differences in results between countries.

The situation was similar for the difference urban/rural origins between the survey respondents (for country of birth, there were no data for the Netherlands. In Croatia and Poland more than 90% of survey respondents were native-born). Here as well, there were small differences between countries but low significance and overall, very little relationship between age, place of origin and countries.

Regarding education, in all countries, more than half of the respondents completed high school or post-high school level, while the second largest group completed undergraduate or postgraduate levels. The only minor differences were that in Poland, there was also an important group of respondents with primary school education only (12 % versus no more than 5% in the Netherlands and Croatia), and that in Croatia, the highest educated group with undergraduate or postgraduate levels was the smallest (22% versus 40% in the Netherlands and 35% in Poland).

In terms of occupational status, in all three countries most respondents were either employed or retired (this was the second largest group), in particular in the Netherlands where retired respondents make up almost one third. This was in line with the already mentioned important presence of persons older than 50, and of persons older than 65 in the Netherlands in particular.

The percentages of persons having a steady or committed relationship were almost identical in the three countries, between 71 and 73%.

Regarding religion, there were marked differences between the countries' samples, as could be expected since there were significant differences in secularisation levels between the countries. Whereas three quarters of the Dutch respondents, living in one of the most secularised European countries, not surprisingly indicated that religion was not or not so important in their lives, almost the same share (69%) of Polish respondents, living in a country with a strong Catholic tradition, answer that religion played a major role or was relatively important in their lives. In Croatia, there was almost a 50/50 distribution between respondents who viewed themselves as religious and those who did not (52/48% to be precise). Next to the earlier mentioned differences in age structure between the countries' survey respondents, religion was the only background variable that displays large discrepancies between the three countries (each having its own very distinct pattern); this thus needed to be considered when interpreting the survey results (see further, from section 4.1. onwards).

A final element regarding the characteristics of the survey respondents in the three countries that requires mentioning, and that also needs to be accounted for when interpreting the survey results, was the important presence of respondents who answer "don't know" or "prefer not to answer". More precisely, Dutch respondents remarkably often respond "don't know" and for many survey questions, their share was at least twice as high as in the other two countries: it goes up to 40%, for example, for the questions what they would say most people in their country think about selling and buying sex, but also when questioned about personal opinions such as if they would mind if they had a family member that was selling sex for a living (still 20% answers "don't know"). This was difficult to explain: it might have been due to the larger presence of the oldest group of more than 65 years among the Dutch respondents, but also to the more prevalent opinion that sex work was more a private than a public matter (see section 3.1. Attitudes towards sex work).

In Poland and Croatia, on the contrary, the percentages of those who responded "prefer not to answer" were often higher, in particular among Polish respondents. This might be ascribed to the sensitive nature of the topic of prostitution and the lack of public debate in both countries, reflecting a high degree of taboo surrounding the issue, which was also suggested by interviewees from these countries. For Poland in particular, the religious background of many survey respondents may also have played a role. This will be discussed again in section 2.6 below on the execution of the fieldwork and the reluctance of certain interviewees to disclose their personal views, as well as in the subsequent sections on personal attitudes regarding sex work, (human trafficking for the purpose of) sexual exploitation and law and policy regulating the sex industry.

## **2.6. Execution of the qualitative data collection: achieved sample versus initial design**

### **2.6.1. Applied methods of data collection**

In all countries, due to the polarisation of the issue of sex work, sensitivities emerged from engagement with stakeholders leading to a difficulty, in some cases, in achieving objective responses; it is very important to take these into account. Therefore, partners have invested significant time and energy in the development and application of diverse, non-invasive and collaborative strategies in their dealings with the field.

The quantitative data for the general public target group was collected from an online survey with a view to contributing to a generalisation for the entire population of each country. This was done so in order to substantiate and generalise the findings. Data were collected using the services of several polling companies with a minimum response rate of 900.<sup>7</sup>

For the qualitative data collection with persons buying sex, persons selling sex, victims of human trafficking, policy makers, civil society and law enforcement, the research design<sup>8</sup> the teams were required i) to map key stakeholders in their areas of research and categorising them into core and functional groups based on the project objectives<sup>9</sup> and ii) to meet and engage with stakeholders in order build trust.<sup>10</sup> The initial key stakeholders acted as gatekeepers to other stakeholders, other research sites as well as to other target groups.<sup>11</sup> The principal strategy has been twofold: i) respondents were purposively selected and then ii) further respondents were identified using the snow-ball method. In order to ensure as a diverse sample as possible, partners also employed additional strategies to identify respondents - see below. Next to conducting semi-structured interviews, partners also used their observations and informal talks in the field for the research.<sup>12</sup> In Poland, a stakeholder meeting took place in June 2017 at the University of Warsaw followed by several further meetings with individual stakeholders. In Croatia, the meeting with national stakeholders was held on 17 October 2017 in Zagreb. In the Netherlands, two meetings with various stakeholders (policy makers and service providers) took place in June 2017 and February 2018. During the first meeting, the research team introduced the DESIRE project and discussed the first theoretical findings of the project. The second meeting discussed the report on different law and policy regulatory approaches as well methodological tools and strategies.

Because of this process of engagement and building trust with the gatekeepers, partners have been able to access and interview hard-to-reach groups such as victims, persons buying sex and those that have exited prostitution and are receiving care and support. In recognition of such an approach can in itself create bias, a variety of techniques were used to further reach

<sup>7</sup>All partners used third party survey companies to implement, disseminate and collect the quantitative data from the online survey.

<sup>8</sup> Derived from the Hope Social Innovation model : see Kaime-Atterhög, W., von Friedrichs, Y., "The House of Plenty – a social innovation model", Emerald Emerging Markets Case Studies, Vol. 7 Issue: 3, (2017) pp.1-24, <https://doi.org/10.1108/EEMCS-03-2016-0041>; Kaime-Atterhög, W. (2012). From Children of the Garbage Bins to Citizens: A reflexive ethnographic study on the care of "street children". (Dissertation), Uppsala University.

<sup>9</sup>Kaime-Atterhög, IS., Hope Methodology Brief 1 – Phase 1 Identify Stakeholders (May 2017).

<sup>10</sup>Kaime-Atterhög, IS., Hope Methodology Brief 2 – Phase 2 Meet, Engage and Connect Stakeholders (May 2017).

<sup>11</sup>Kaime-Atterhög, IS., Hope Methodology Brief 3 – Phase 2 Meet, Engage and Connect Stakeholders (June 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Kaime-Atterhög, IS., Hope Methodology Brief 4 – Understand the context and define the problem (January 2018).



the target groups directly (see The Netherlands and Poland). So next to the above-mentioned strategy of building contacts and trust in the field and referral by key persons, the partners also developed other strategies to contact respondents. These additional methods for engaging with the target groups are further outlined below.

### **2.6.2. Online sex work forums**

The methods of the data collection also differed per sector, since in some cases, the only possible way to reach respondents was via specific forums: this was the case for persons selling sex and for persons buying sex. The Polish team contacted persons buying sex via an online forum for persons buying sex and persons selling sex (see Annex 6.2. Record of discussions between the University of Warsaw Team and forum members regarding participation in the DESIRE research). In the Netherlands, online forums were initially used to reach persons buying sex, however, it also presented itself as a good opportunity to reach male persons selling sex. The Dutch team placed advertisements with a call for participation on online sex work forums and developed an online questionnaire that they posted on the websites where persons selling sex place their advertisements and that they promoted on Facebook and via LinkedIn.

The Dutch team had a rather strange experience when attempting to conduct interviews via an online gay chat room. An account with the name 'sex industry research' was created and supplemented with a short description of the core research goals. Initially, it was very difficult to start conversation. However, as soon as one lengthy interview was conducted via the chat, the rest followed. This situation sparked the suspicion that online users were communicating among themselves about the researcher present within the chat room. This suspicion was later confirmed through users direct messaging the researcher regarding things they could have only known if this was the case. Surprisingly enough, this strategy was one of the most effective and the Dutch researchers received responses from both males selling sex and their persons buying sex. The chatrooms gave them an opportunity to both interview persons selling sex and persons buying sex 'on the spot' (online) but could also be used to arrange meetings with those persons selling sex who were willing to meet face to face. Although fieldwork on the online forums is very effective especially when addressing closed anonymous groups, it has its downsides because online users provide no, or only very limited, background information on age, education and family situation.

### **2.6.3. Reaching persons selling sex**

The Croatian Life Quality Improvement Organisation "FLIGHT", which has been implementing outreach services under the scope of harm reduction programs to persons selling sex since 2003, is one of the several service providers in the different countries who used their long-standing contacts with the field to involve persons selling sex in the research. Although some of the Croatian persons selling sex on the street involved had moved from the streets to their own or rented apartments, they remained in contact with the outreach workers. FLIGHT collaborators distribute condoms, lubricants and educational materials to persons selling sex, and promote and refer persons selling sex to HIV testing. For a while, the organisation was



also organising free gynaecological check-ups. Further, FLIGHT is also working with some pimps that 'employ' several persons selling sex, so pimps could be used as 'gatekeepers'. In the other countries as well, many of the persons selling sex but sometimes also persons buying sex were reached following referral by key persons in the field, service providers or policy makers as well as pimps or facilitators.

The Polish team created databases of contacts of persons providing sexual services, collecting over 1,500 telephone numbers and more than 900 email addresses (telephones and/or e-mail addresses) of persons providing sexual services. With this method, five women were found willing to participate in the research. The Dutch team distributed flyers with a call for participation in the project in the red-light districts and asked persons selling sex for help in distributing flyers among their persons buying sex. On these occasions, the researchers were able to also engage into conversation with the persons selling sex themselves and interview them.

The Dutch team experienced specific difficulties to reach persons selling sex. Although persons selling sex can legally work in the Netherlands, they are quite reluctant to participate in research projects. There were several reasons for this. First, persons selling sex are often suspicious towards researchers, regarding the effect that the research might have on their future work and well-being. They were especially worried about findings being used against them due to the over protection and victimisation. Therefore, initial contact with service providers who work with them was necessary as well as extensive outreach work. Secondly, the persons selling sex were really concerned about their anonymity, especially when their close circles do not know about their activity in the sex industry. Also, because of the current, influential trafficking discourse in the Netherlands, Dutch persons selling sex are generally very careful in sharing their positions and views.<sup>13</sup>

#### **2.6.4. Reaching victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation**

As already mentioned in the limitations section and when discussing the victims' background, this was the most difficult group to access for interview. In Poland and Croatia, there is a huge lack of attention, and public debate on, the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings: this receives very low policy priority and thereby remains largely 'hidden', as well as the victims themselves. In addition, stakeholders often appeared to be very protective of the victims, in particular social workers and health workers. On the contrary, in the Netherlands there was an active public debate and several ongoing research projects that target victims of trafficking. As a result, the researchers observed a certain "research fatigue", since neither gate keepers nor victims themselves were willing to facilitate or engage in more projects.

This protective attitude of stakeholders, although well understandable, created important obstacles to victim participation. Further, it was not always clear to the researchers if these stakeholders were correctly and legitimately protective or if they were over-protective and

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<sup>13</sup> DESIRE, Report on the legal and regulatory approaches towards sex work in four EU-countries (July 2018), available at: <http://project-desire.eu/report-on-the-legal-and-regulatory-approaches-towards-sex-work-in-four-eu-countries-2/>

deprive the victims of a voice. In Poland, for example, both NGOs and law enforcement protected victims so intensively that almost nothing was known about victims of trafficking there. It should of course be emphasised that it is not because the DESIrE researchers did not manage to reach many victims that there are none.

#### **2.6.5. Reaching persons buying sex**

Persons buying sex as well (see section 2.5.5) were generally hard to reach and were not very open. Moreover, they often adopted a critical stance towards the DESIrE project. In Poland, buyer respondents generally did not want to talk about themselves too much to protect their anonymity. This corresponds to the earlier mentioned reluctance of the Polish public to share personal views on the selling and buying of sex (see 2.4.7. background general public). In contrast, however, when asked whether adults should be free to choose if they want to sell or buy sex, many Polish survey respondents expressed their opinion and only a few responded “prefer not to answer”.

In the Netherlands as well, persons buying sex represent a group that is difficult to reach, even though the sex industry is legal in the country, so in order to contact persons buying sex, the Dutch researchers visited Public Health Centers and made use of personal networks among students and student associations. Like the Polish researchers, the main contact route to persons buying sex was the above-mentioned use of online sex work forums. In Poland, the cooperation with the above mentioned internet forum allowed the researchers to contact three respondents. In addition, for the purposes of this report, the Polish team analysed the statements of 9 persons buying sex on this online forum, which they submitted in response to the invitation to participate in the research. In Annex 7.3., it becomes clear from these buyer's posts on the forum that there was quite a lot of suspicion and critique of this group towards the research project. Forumer 1, for example, mentions: *“I have already learned that collecting all opinions is for me to play some actions later. E.g. prohibiting prostitution”*, while forumer 7 describes the research project as *“another femi-nazists jihad that wants to punish customers”* (see Annex 7.3.).

#### **2.6.6. Issues arising during engagement with stakeholders and research participants**

It is important to highlight that there was a polarisation towards sex work that transpired in the experts-stakeholders' ideological and value-based positions, leading to critiques of the DESIrE project from certain members of this group. For example, the EU focus on imposing the Swedish model was mentioned by several respondents, with accusations that the project sought to criminalise persons buying sex (see the statements of Polish persons buying sex above, for example). But equally, partners have heard that the project was considered to advocate the criminalising of persons selling sex and the provision of sexual services (Poland).

To achieve a maximum diversity of expert respondents in terms of ideological views, occupation and opinions, the researchers presented themselves in a very neutral position. The Dutch team, for example, organised two workshops for a variety of stakeholders that provided

them with the first access to these respondents and gave the latter a chance to get to know the researchers personally. Prior to this, some respondents held quite a prejudiced opinion about the DESIRE project. For example, one of the sex work rights' protection organisations did not reply to the Dutch researchers' emails and requests for an interview. However, when the researchers visited during opening hours and introduced themselves, the organisation was much more willing to speak and cooperate. One sex worker in the Netherlands clearly stated that she was afraid that her answer will be 'twisted' in the final research output. She was particularly concerned about the use of the terms 'demand' and 'exploitation'. Moreover, it worried her that the project was financed by the European Union. Finally, she emphasised that it ought to be persons selling sex themselves who should conduct this type of research (e.g. conduct the interviews).

Overall, partners have found that a focus on safety and protection has been a bridging point and a way of finding a common narrative with stakeholders from all positions (see below, 'actions to protect persons selling sex'). In all the countries, safety appeared to be a priority of all parties involved in the policy and service providers field. By stressing safety issues, the researchers were able to motivate organisations to talk to them and participate in the research, even though they were sceptical at first.

Finally, and importantly, in all the countries, partners noticed that many experts-stakeholders were very concerned about privacy issues, in the sense that many refused to take a position and opted to maintain neutrality. At the same time, a distinction was raised between the official position and a personal position: during the interviews, especially policymakers and law enforcement officers were reluctant to share their personal opinions about the laws and policies. When they did, they insisted that they should be anonymised and that it should not be traceable to them. On the contrary, academics and independent researchers were generally open about their position and did not ask for complete anonymisation.

In Poland, for example, many experts reacted to the proposal to conduct an interview with some reservations because of fear that during the interview, they would have to opt clearly for legalisation or against it, and also because this was still a difficult issue in Poland, prostitution being covered by a strong moral taboo. The Warsaw Municipal Police officially refused to take part in the DESIRE project. The Polish Catholic Association "PO Moc", dealing with victims of sexual abuse and victims of human trafficking, also refused to participate in the project.

### **3. Sex work**

The data collection sought to determine attitudes towards sex work in Croatia, The Netherlands and Poland amongst the different target groups (section 3.1) and to develop an understanding of the context of the sex industry in Croatia, The Netherlands and Poland including new forms and trends (section 3.2). Finally, this section will begin to determine the measures required to ensure the protection and safety of persons selling sex, and to begin to determine the extent to which the law and policy model in Croatia, The Netherlands and Poland addresses these aspects (section 3.3).

#### **3.1. Attitudes towards sex work and prostitution**

As an introductory remark, it is important to highlight that identifying attitudes, and separating respondents' discourses from their actual behaviours, or professional from personal views, is always a very difficult task, whether qualitative interviews or quantitative surveys are used. Attitudes were complex and varied: there was no consensus in either of the categories of respondents. The findings presented here thus have to be interpreted bearing these remarks in mind, knowing that important differences in attitudes result from different national 'framings' of sex work, different political cultures and socio-political power balances, different traditions of public debate (or lack thereof), and different approaches (laws and policies) to sex work.

In all the countries, the researchers did not only find differences in attitudes *between* but also *within* the same groups of interviewees. Therefore, regarding the question how attitudes differ between the different categories of interviewees, only very general remarks can be made: overall, persons selling sex, persons buying sex, policy officials and civil society stakeholders tended to have more positive attitudes towards sex work, while victims and law enforcers more often mentioned negative aspects of sex work.

The survey data regarding attitudes among the general public revealed an even more complex picture, with both positive and negative opinions about sex work, differences and similarities between countries, and differences between personal views on the selling or buying of sex and personal opinions about the rights of individuals who sell or buy sex, to name but a few examples.

Regarding the question of what the respondents believed to be the *public opinion* in their country regarding sex work, the survey data confirmed the finding that emerged from the interviews (discussed further below) that in Croatia and Poland, both the selling and the buying of sex were viewed more negatively by the public than in the Netherlands: around 65% of Croatian and 70% of Polish survey respondents thought that people in their country were not in favour of the selling and the buying of sex, against 39% of Dutch respondents (in all countries percentages for selling were almost identical to those for buying sex). Although lower, the share of Dutch respondents who thought that the public opinion was not in favour is still important, considering that around 40% responded "don't know" (see also section 2.5.7. on the high prevalence of "don't know" answers in the Netherlands). As will be discussed further below, this was also in line with the interview data: Dutch interviewees indicated that although

sex work is legalised in their country and therefore relatively well tolerated, it remained surrounded with taboo, negative views and stigma.

When asked about their *personal views* on selling and buying sex, in Poland and Croatia respondents answered almost the same as on the question regarding the public opinion: between 65 and 70% were not in favour. Apart from this important presence of negative personal attitudes towards sex work, several Polish and Croatian survey respondents chose not to share their personal views: between 10 and 20% responded “prefer not to answer” (see also section 2.5.7. backgrounds general public). It was remarkable that the pattern was so similar in both countries, despite the important differences in religious background of the survey respondents that we mentioned earlier (section 2.5.7.). Being religious or not seems to have had no significant effect on personal views on sex work.

Among the Dutch public, a different, much more divided picture emerged: those in favour of selling sex were the largest group (40%), but only slightly larger than those who were not in favour (36%), and one in four responded “don’t know” (24%). Regarding the buying of sex, those not in favour gained the upper hand (47%), opposed to one third who were in favour and 22% that responded “don’t know”. Again, although public attitudes towards the selling and buying of sex were, overall, less negative in the Netherlands than in the two other countries, there was no public consensus, and the popular claim that sex work was generally accepted or considered as ‘normal’ in the Netherlands cannot be sustained (this was also mentioned by Dutch interviewees and discussed further below).

Remarkably, where there were negative personal attitudes, these were put aside by survey respondents in all the countries when asked whether adults should be free to choose if they want to sell or buy sex. 75% of Dutch and Polish survey respondents thought that selling sex for a living should be a matter of individual choice, and 65% (Poland) to 70% (the Netherlands) thought that people should have the right to buy sex. In Croatia, there were fewer respondents who shared these opinions, respectively 65% (selling) and 60% (buying), but they still constituted a large majority. Equally remarkable was that in all three countries, there were much fewer “don’t know” or “prefer not to answer” responses than was the case for many other questions (see section 2.5.7.). This indicated that members of the public found it important to clearly support the notion of individual rights for persons involved in the sex industry, even when they viewed these persons rather negatively.

Regarding the questions whether the selling or buying of sex are viewed as a public or a private issue, there were important differences between the countries (yet with very similar patterns for selling and buying): in Poland, the responses were evenly spread across the different categories, but ‘public issue’ has the highest score of the three countries, especially among women. In the Netherlands, on the contrary, an overwhelming majority viewed the selling and buying of sex either as a private (58%) or as a mixed public-private matter (27%). In Croatia, the latter public-private category was the largest (45%), but only a bit more than the category private (40%). Croatian interviews confirmed the existence of divided opinions regarding the question whether sex work is a public or a private matter. Policy makers and NGO representatives perceived it as a personal matter, while law enforcement professionals saw it

as a public matter, or conditionally private – in cases of violence, lack of protection and when doing sex work in the streets, it becomes public.

Overall, there clearly was no consensus among the general public and, on top of that, the public was ambivalent: this was identified as ‘public hypocrisy’ by various interviewees and will be discussed further in section 3.1.2.

In all the countries, the interviewees almost equalised sex work with the term prostitution, but with the difference that sex work generally has more positive connotations of work, sounds less stigmatising, more often presumes legalisation or decriminalisation, and was associated more often with voluntariness. This corresponded with the opinion of the founder of the term ‘sex work’, Carol Leigh, who proposed to refer to prostitutes as persons selling sex because the latter implies the possibility of voluntary choice and refers to the working context. The term ‘prostitution’ often had more negative connotations, as one Dutch sex worker explained: *“I associate ‘prostitute’ and ‘prostitution’ with a newspaper report. Like: prostitute chopped into pieces and stuff like that or prostitute-20 prostitutes murdered. And ‘sex work’ does really focus on the aspect that it’s work”* (NL-SW5).

However, as the conclusions of the desktop research into the legal and regulatory approaches towards sex work in four EU-countries highlighted,<sup>14</sup> since the term did not include instances of coercion or force, it might not always be considered as appropriate by those who experience violence and exploitation: *“if I was working in prostitution by force, I would not like the term ‘sex work’”* (NL-SW7).

The Polish team mentioned that after having conducted numerous interviews, the term ‘sex worker’ did not (yet) function in Polish language.<sup>15</sup> The terms ‘prostitute’ and ‘prostitution’ were still treated as correct and appropriate, although there was consensus that both terms bear a rather pejorative undertone. On the other hand, organisations of persons selling sex activists were struggling to eliminate the word ‘prostitute’ from regular use.

Most interviewees in Croatia, the Netherlands and Poland stressed the economic dimensions of sex work. For most respondents, sex work related to a monetary transaction that happens between the buyer and provider, and in addition it was perceived as a job, or even survival strategy that helped in overcoming current socio-economic deprivation. Two Polish persons buying sex, on the contrary, dismissed the economic dimension and rather identified sexual work and prostitution as doing something against oneself and as risky behaviour: *“If someone loves sex, they do not have to sell it”* (PL-B07). Among the general public, more than half of Dutch and Croatian respondents agreed that selling sex should be treated like any other form of employment. Polish survey respondents, like the Polish interviewees mentioned above, were more divided, with 45% in favour and 51% against. In the Netherlands, nearly 20% responded “don’t know”.

<sup>14</sup> DESIRE Report on the legal and regulatory approaches towards sex work in four EU-countries (July 2017), available at: <http://project-desire.eu/report-on-the-legal-and-regulatory-approaches-towards-sex-work-in-four-eu-countries-2/>.

<sup>15</sup> PL-E05, PL-E06, PL-E09, PL-E10, PL-E11, PL-E12, PL-E13, PL-E14, PL-E19, PL-E21, PL-E25, PL-SW13, PL-SW15. Apart from these interviewees’ explicit statements about their issues with the term ‘sex worker’, almost all other Polish interviewees also made implicit comments about this, between the lines.



### **3.1.1. Attitudes of persons selling sex**

Persons selling sex themselves also stressed the economic dimensions of their activities, often depicting them as a strategy for survival, to pay the bills, provide food, even as a 'necessary evil', but also as a very hard job. For instance, in Croatia, persons selling sex chose to start sex work due to financial pressures and a lack of alternatives, and otherwise would not do it. As one Croatian sex worker stated: *"Selling for money (...) a way out (...) if it doesn't exist, I don't know how I would survive"* (HR-SW13). Another sex worker similarly indicated that she did not find an alternative solution: *"I ran away from my husband in Croatia and found nothing else to do"* (HR-SW8).

In the Netherlands, persons selling sex were not usually referring to what they were doing as prostitution; this was especially noticeable in the interviews of window and escort persons selling sex. They called it: *"work behind the windows"*, *"this job"* (NL-SW10; NL-SW1). Similarly, in Poland, it is a job for them as any other and should be legal (PL-SW1, PL-SW2, PL-SW-3, PL-SW5, PL-SW8, PL-SW9, PL-SW10, PL-SW14, PL-SW15). Conversely, one sex worker stated that the current law on sex work is very good (PL-SW4), whereas another thinks that it should be decriminalised (PL-SW13). However, they expressed the fear that with the legalisation, there would be an obligation to register the profession and, consequently, disclosure and stigmatisation (PL-SW13, PL-SW15, PL-SW4).

Many sex worker respondents emphasised the burdens that they faced, the fact that their work was physically and psychologically demanding and that it felt as if everyone was against them: *"This is the hardest job in the world. Who hasn't tried it, doesn't know. Police is against you, neighbours, buyers, procurers. Everyone. Prices are constantly falling down, young and good looking are coming. You have to hold out this all"* (HR-SW13). A Dominican sex worker active in the Netherlands stated (citation via the interpreter from Spanish): *"you get more adjusted to do the things and also when you start to see that the money is coming and you can pay your bills and have to eat (...) But it is very painful work. Because most of the men they treat you like you are an object. They do not respect you, only because they are paying you (...) it would be nice that they [persons selling sex] have more opportunity to do other types of jobs, because it is the need that brings you to do this kind of job"* (NL-SW3). At the same time, the tendency mentioned above was definitely not the same for all persons selling sex in the Netherlands. More precisely, traumatic experiences similar to the above were depicted in two out of nineteen interviews in both cases with former persons selling sex from Latin America. Other persons selling sex, especially of a Dutch and Romanian origin, were referring to sex work as a difficult occupation, but still as a good and legal possibility to earn a decent income. For instance, one student selling sex from a very developed country (the USA) chose the occupation *"out of curiosity"*. Nevertheless, the economic element was strongly present in all interviews.

### **3.1.2. Public hypocrisy**

In Croatia and Poland, mostly persons selling sex and persons buying sex, but also interviewees from the other categories suggested that there was significant public hypocrisy in their countries: on the one hand, sex work was generally qualified as a 'necessary evil' but on



the other hand, it was taboo. These interviewees mentioned that sex work has always been there, and always will be, but it is not talked about. There appeared to be public and official tolerance only if sex work remains hidden from the public eye. This explains why street prostitution, the most visible form of sex work, was often the priority of law enforcement in these countries, leaving other forms and sectors of sex work aside.

Croatian persons selling sex complained about everyone being against them, for example: *"It's a disaster! They arrest us. This is the only job where you do not have any rights"* (HR-SW9), and *"Police, neighbours, clients, pimps, all are against you (...) There you have to be able to handle everything"* (HR-SW-13). A Polish law enforcement official vividly illustrated the prevailing public hypocrisy in his country: *"some think it's immoral (...) There is hypocrisy in our country. For example, a father driving a car with children is outraged by the fact that prostitutes are standing beside the road, but then he uses their services himself. Priests use them as well, roadside girls told me. If they had state support they would have tangible benefits. Pushing into the underground is not a solution, it only gives rise to pathologies"* (PL-E05).

Croatian persons selling sex also viewed the public attitude as hypocritical referring to their customers who demonstrated other values in their family and social surroundings then when they buy sexual services: *"Many people use them [sexual services], then go to church on Sunday"* (HR-SW14); *"Hypocritical. Everyone is shaken and acting morally outraged, yet everyone will just have sex. And I will not even talk about how much they steal. Most men come to me: 'F... me' and back at home, they hate it"* (HR-SW1). Some Croatian persons selling sex connected this hypocrisy with a more general social hypocrisy that they viewed as characteristic for the national or the regional 'Balkan' context. This public ambivalence was also mentioned by Croatian persons buying sex and stakeholders. Similarly, Polish persons selling sex<sup>16</sup>, persons buying sex<sup>17</sup> and experts<sup>18</sup> mentioned that sex work was viewed in a negative light by society and that there was a kind of dualism in the approach to sex work. On the one hand, the official position of society was negative, and on the other hand, sex work practices were tolerated and were not a marginal phenomenon. Some interviewees said that this was due to the Catholic background of many Polish citizens, and the Polish survey data appeared to confirm this: overall, members of the general public in Poland, women in particular, displayed more negative and more conservative attitudes towards (the protection of) persons selling sex than in other countries, and most of them indicated that they were religious (religion played an important to major role in their lives). Condemnation and contempt were directed towards persons selling sex and not towards the persons buying sex (see section 3.1.3). Persons buying sex were generally excused by the prevailing belief that *"men need sex"* (PL-B1, PL-B3, PL-B5, PL-SW9).

Overall, both the interviews and the survey data suggested considerable ambivalence of the public, coupled with a 'not in my backyard' attitude: people considered sex work to be fine as long as it was not related to them (their friends or family members). For example, in all the countries, most survey respondents (in Poland this group is the smallest) agreed that people

<sup>16</sup> PL-SW1, PL-SW2, PL-SW3, PL-SW5, PL-SW8, PL-SW9, PL-SW10, PL-SW12, PL-SW13, PL-SW14

<sup>17</sup> PL-B1, PL-B4, PL-B5, PL-B6, PL-B7, PL-B8, PL-B9

<sup>18</sup> PL-E1, PL-E5, PL-E6, PL-E7, PL-E12, PL-E13, PL-E15, PL-E17, PL-E18, PL-E19, PL-E20, PL-E21, PL-E22, PL-E25, PL-E26

have the right to sell and buy sex and would be willing to hire a former sex worker or to have a colleague who was selling or buying sex. However, a large majority would mind having a family member that was selling or buying sex (a little less for buying). In the Netherlands, this group was smaller, but it remained the largest and many responded “don’t know” – suggesting that having a family member involved in the sex industry was not okay for them either. An interview with a Dutch stakeholder confirmed this ambivalence of the public, despite greater acceptance of sex work because it was regulated by law: *“I think people in general think it must be okay because it’s legal. I think most people think: “Well, if that’s what they choose, there is nothing wrong with it, it’s their decision. But if you would ask: so you wouldn’t mind if your daughter works in prostitution, that’s a complete different story. They will never want that to happen. So it’s very double” (NL-P12).*

A particularity for the Netherlands was that, although the survey results demonstrated that public opinions were varied and ambivalent, there was a dominant discourse that presented sex work as a ‘generally accepted occupation’. Two Dutch interviewees suggested that this ‘acceptance’ by the general population was linked to the legalisation of the industry. One policy official (NL-P8) who described sex work as being normal and accepted immediately linked this to the presence of a legal framework for the sex industry. This raises the question whether legality or illegality has an impact on overall public perceptions of the sex industry. In practice, however, legalisation of the industry does not imply ‘normalisation’: among the interviewees, sex work was not considered as ‘normal’ or as commonly accepted occupation in the Netherlands.

In a similar way, legal or ‘normalised’ does not mean that the sector is not vulnerable: some respondents mentioned that legalisation does not necessarily imply safety, meaning that the sector was objectively vulnerable and often unsafe in terms of health risks, violence and criminal engagement (see section 3.3. on safety). Further, several Dutch respondents criticised what they view as a hypocritical approach by the government: on the one hand, public authorities aim to legalise the sex industry and consequently profit from the taxable income, but on the other hand, it is viewed with significant stigma. One Dutch buyer provided the following example of this ambivalence of the authorities: *“Because a few years ago, there was a different lady who provided SM services and she worked for the Dutch government, some high function. Yeah, and she was immediately cut down. And then I think to myself, yes, if she does her job well, and besides that she has customers to whom she offers SM services, what is the harm in that?” (NL-B2).*

Regarding public attitudes to sex work in the Netherlands, a Dutch health care provider also mentioned the presence of a so-called ‘overprotective’ attitude, which was described as *“saying that sex work is something we should not do as a society and therefore we should try to demotivate people to engage in sex work as much as possible as we do with cigarettes (...) Another approach that it is partly justifiable but also dangerous it is to say that there is so much risk involved in the sector that we should try and protect all sex workers against themselves, we should register them and make sure we know where they are, that they are working voluntarily” (NL-P2).* The latter attitude can be traced back to the trafficking discourse that

became especially salient after the famous trafficking Sneep Case in 2008, in which case the trafficking partly took place in the legalised part of the Dutch sex business.

### **3.1.3. Stigma experienced by persons selling sex**

In all the countries, both among the groups of interviewees and among the general public, there appeared to be strong awareness that persons selling sex were stigmatised. Between 70% and 80% of survey respondents in the Netherlands, Croatia and Poland believed that persons selling sex are stigmatized because of their involvement in the sex industry. Persons selling sex themselves confirmed that they experience stigma. In Croatia, for example, some of the interviewed persons selling sex referred to their own stigmatised position feeling that others see them as immoral persons, give them no rights and treat them as unworthy persons in the criminal justice system.

Most persons selling sex did not share this with their family and friends because they felt that society is judgmental towards them. In some cases, especially among Romanian respondents in the Netherlands, persons selling sex were not willing to share what they were doing with their families back home. Simultaneously, Latin American persons selling sex interviewed in the Netherlands did share about their work with children and families. Although families back in the home communities might accept the occupation due to the economic reasons, the stigma remains high (Siegel, 2012). As a Dutch sex worker put it : *“You are not going to tell that to everybody, that is not necessary (...) not that I don’t want to, but because people paint a picture of you of which I thought: no, I want you to view me as the person I am, and not like someone who is doing that kind of work”* (NL-SW 6).

Other persons selling sex, however, experienced less or even no stigma at all, because people are either understanding towards them, or simply ignore what they are doing. Moreover, even when the stigma was manifest, it does not prevent people from entering the sex industry, since, as one Croatian respondent put it, *“stigma of poverty is stronger”* (HR-E8)<sup>19</sup>.

In the Netherlands, as already mentioned, there appeared to be public acceptance related to the legalisation of the sector, but that did not mean that sex work was perceived as ‘normal’ or that there was no stigma attached to it. One Dutch sex worker mentioned that her neighbours started being hostile towards her when they discovered what her occupation was, putting worms in her mailbox and being very disrespectful. As a result, she had to move to a different place (NL-SW13). Another sex worker mentioned that: *“In the eyes of society, hookers are the lowest of the lowest. They deserve no respect, they deserve disdain, they deserve humiliation. And the violence is justified”* (NL-SW5). Most Dutch persons buying sex also emphasised stigma, taboo and prejudice in Dutch society towards the sex industry. As one of them put it: *“This is simply taboo. It is seen as ‘not normal’”* (NL-B2).

Some of the Dutch experts/policy makers blamed the trafficking discourse for increasing the stigma for persons selling sex, while at the same time, making attitudes towards persons selling sex overprotective. For instance, a human rights’ activist stated: *“I see the stigma increasing because some of my friends, who are quite open, who felt they could be open about*

<sup>19</sup>“ Na žalost ne, jer je stigma siromaštva jača”

*their work, now don't do that anymore. So now they are back in hiding again. And what I see is that sex workers have been totally infantilised over the last few years. Like little children who need to be under control. By brothel owners, under control by the police, under control by the municipalities. And one factor is of course the hype on human trafficking, and the idea that any sex worker is a victim of trafficking, or a victim, if not of trafficking then of circumstances"* (NL-P1).

Migrants selling sex in the Netherlands, however, often found the public attitude quite open and appeared to experience less stigma: *"people are quite open. They have nothing against it, nobody makes jokes about you, or ridicule you"* (NL-SW1). Yet they referred to the industry as something 'normal in the Netherlands only'. Since in some countries prostitution is regarded as deviant, persons selling sex most likely choose to be involved in the industry abroad, where the occupation is legal or more acceptable.<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, the answers of two Romanians selling sex interviewed by the Dutch team (NL-SW1 & NL-SW2) clearly illustrated this theoretical insight. For instance, one mentioned that she was totally unaware of how the sex industry is developed in her country. The other one described that her family did not know what she has been doing and she was very clear that unlike in Romania where people are extremely hostile towards this profession, the Netherlands seemed to be more open about it. She said that if there would be such a street (meaning the red-light district) in Romania, there would be much violence. At the same time, she indicated that she did not understand how the Dutch Government is profiting from the sex industry; it did not feel right for her. In one of the informal talks, another sex worker from Romania also mentioned that it was only in The Netherlands that such job can be accepted, and, therefore, she would never marry there. Nevertheless, she felt that this type of work is fine for some time to gain an income and to build up the business back home, in Romania.

#### **3.1.4. Personal attitudes of persons buying sex and of stakeholders**

Unsurprisingly, persons buying sex generally displayed positive attitudes towards sex work. More specifically, they qualified sex work as socially useful, necessary and even some form of help. They generally favoured legalisation of the sex industry and many emphasised the importance of sex work as an activity based on consent and personal choice, avoiding any connection with coercion. Other common attitudes among persons buying sex were understanding towards persons selling sex and stressing the benefits from having a sexual relation without any emotional commitment: *"For many unhappy people it is like a valve. Benefit is mutual"* (HR-B16). In Croatia, persons buying sex also remarked that the legalisation of sex could also contribute to their own de-stigmatisation: *"You come in as gentleman, do your work and pay"* (HR-B29). Male survey respondents in Poland were the only ones who explicitly state that the 'protection of persons buying sex' should be the main concern of the authorities (yet they only make up 6%); in other countries and among female respondents, this was not mentioned as a priority by members of the general public.

<sup>20</sup> DESIRE, Report on Demand for Sexual Services that can fuel Sexual Exploitation in the Context of Human Trafficking (July 2017), p.35, available at: <http://project-desire.eu/report-on-demand-for-sexual-services-that-can-fuel-sexual-exploitation-in-the-context-of-human-trafficking/>.

Dutch persons buying sex pointed out that despite its legalised status and ‘fairly liberal’ public attitudes in the Netherlands, the sex industry will never be entirely normalised, and remains to be surrounded with stigma, prejudice, and taboo: *“I think that in the Netherlands it is accepted that it happens but there is a taboo on going there”* (NL-B9). Another buyer added: *“I think here it is quite open, everyone knows that it happens and exists. But people will always look at it judgingly, it is not “normal” like going shopping (...) it will remain a strange field. Prostitution will never be the same as being a builder, or a teacher. Whores do not want anyone to know, and most buyers don’t want that either”* (NL-B18).

This last point refers to the fact that both persons selling sex and persons buying sex get a sense of shame because of the persisting stigma. In all the countries, even when persons buying sex did not view their own behaviour as deviant, some reported to feel ashamed or uncomfortable to talk about their personal activities and experiences. Persons buying sex generally felt more comfortable sharing their views on general attitudes in their country. As a Dutch buyer stated: *“I am ashamed about it, and I find it strange to talk about it, preferably, I rather not talk about it at all”* (NL-B7).

The personal attitudes of experts-stakeholders show differences between the group of policy makers, NGO representatives and service providers on the one hand, and law enforcement officers on the other. In Croatia, these differences were very marked, the group of policy makers, NGO representatives and service providers had more positive attitudes towards both persons selling sex and persons buying sex – if the sex work was based on free will – while law enforcement officers were more negative or strict. When it comes to persons buying sex, Croatian policy makers mostly felt that persons buying sex have needs whose behaviour was justified and NGO representatives mostly believe that they had the right to use the services of persons selling sex. In general, both policy makers and NGO representatives were more supportive towards sex work if it was based on a free will. Law enforcement officers, on the other hand, were divided in viewing them either as persons with needs or as offenders, and therefore also in their answers to the question whether persons buying sex should be allowed to obtain sexual services. This was due to the fact that sex work is criminalized in Croatia but a number of respondents from law enforcement were aware that one becomes a sex worker due to poverty or lack of financial resources.

### **3.2. New forms and trends in the sex industry**

#### **3.2.1. Shift to underground – vulnerability of the sector**

Project partners pointed out that recently, prostitution has changed in character, moving from outside to inside and from being visible to being more invisible. The internet was cited as the major new arena for prostitution, many interactions being carried out online with women or men advertising themselves directly or involving facilitators. As was mentioned earlier, in the Netherlands, researchers have found an ethnic divide between native-born girls working as high-class escorts and call girls on the one hand, and the most vulnerable and visible group of (undocumented) migrants selling sex who work in window or street prostitution.

The invisible prostitution may also manifest itself as a part of ‘normal’ work or in relationships.



Further, hotels, hostels and apartments that function as private pop-up brothels are other places where persons selling sex and persons buying sex meet, especially call girls and escorts, and in the case of the Netherlands, males selling sex who are particularly active in the underground illegal market and rarely present in the visible sex work sectors such as window prostitution and clubs.

Dutch respondents also pointed out that the sex industry was shifting underground, increasing its vulnerability even further. Policy makers, service providers and persons selling sex mentioned that the visible sectors were not as popular anymore as they used to be decades ago, generating greater financial insecurity for the persons selling sex. One sex worker explained that: *“the problem is that they simply don't get as many buyers anymore. Uh, so that is really frustrating because a lot of the time they are simply losing money. And you cannot tell if you are going to be able to make money one day or not. It is almost becoming riskier to work, not physically, but financially”* (NL-SW11). Home prostitution that is advertised on special websites has become increasingly popular in the Netherlands, as one Dutch expert indicated: *“10 years ago you could go on the street, you could go and stand at the station and instantly see, like, wait, something is happening there that is not right (...) it has all moved itself onto the internet (...) so chat boxes, to websites (...) or, via the App”* (NL-P10). The shift away from the classical window prostitution also manifested itself in a variety of other forms, many of which equally remain invisible: *“illegal prostitution in Amsterdam, there are different forms. There is prostitution at homes, there are escorts services that are not legal, you have massage parlours and I think we see just a part of them”* (NL-P4). At the same time, public authorities and policy makers barely pay attention to some of these new forms of sex work, such as, for example, massage parlours, home sex work advertised on the internet and underground male sex work.

According to Polish interviewees, one of the reasons why the sex industry moves underground is the punishment of clients, and persons selling sex always end up being the victims. Dutch experts attributed the shift to the underground to the growth of the internet, but they also added specific Dutch factors, e.g. restrictive municipal policies (e.g. the closing of public premises), high rents for the windows and high registration costs. In some cities, like Amsterdam, the rent prices for the windows are quite high, while there are not enough persons buying sex to cover the rent, making it more profitable to move online and provide sexual services at home or in a rented apartment. One Dutch sex worker stopped working behind the windows in 2013 for this reason and hears from her ex-colleagues that it is much less profitable than it used to be. She mentioned that many persons selling sex in windows are in debt and do not even make enough to pay the rent for the window: *“the work is not very good now, here it has been really, really hard to make rent. Also at night. So I have asked some of the people that I know: have you thought about escorting or a private home? and they say: yes, escorting. But for some reason, they prefer this then doing some other sort of prostitution”* (NL-SW4).

Another explanation for the Dutch sex industry moving underground was the fact that municipalities are closing licensed facilities, and consequently owners of existing facilities become more demanding: *“because many, many licensed facilities are closing, the few that do remain, have gained more power. So those private homes, those owners, they act as*

bosses” (NL-SW6). Dutch persons buying sex also stated that there are fewer and fewer places available where they can legally buy sexual services, and attributed this to the media becoming focused on providing a bad image of the sex industry: *“it was 23 years ago that I started with it. Back then the world was very different of course (...) back then it wasn’t so prevalent in the media. I mean, then there were much more options. Many more places where you could go. That has of course become much less in recent years”* (NL-B2). In case there are no possibilities to work in the red-light districts and persons selling sex are not in the possession of a car, they do not have many other options then to work at home, although it is illegal and sometimes less safe. Since there are no clear policies on escort sex work and street sex work was closed down in several municipalities, many males selling sex are advertising their services at home. Also, since the ‘criminal screening’ (Wet Bob), many male sex clubs were closed and never opened again, which was another reason why this group shifted almost entirely to the internet business.

Finally, Dutch respondents working with underground sex work (health care professionals, social workers) mentioned that since it was only possible to legally work in the sex industry for EU nationals and Dutch citizens, migrants from outside the EU were overrepresented among the persons selling sex who engage in the sex industry illegally. One expert mentioned the presence of many Ukrainians in the illegal sector, another mentioned Latin-American transgender persons: *“the transgenders for example, those from Brazil or Venezuela, they for example have a tourist visa, but they simply have apartments. It has all been organised. From out of Brazil or Venezuela, they firstly come to Madrid. And then, in Madrid they are told where they can for example rent an apartment in Amsterdam. And then they just come in because they can be here for free and anonymous”* (NL-P15).

In Croatia, where sex work is illegal and therefore underground, new trends are brought as tourism develops and organised sex work is moving towards hotels and resorts. In Poland, the internet is the most common way of getting persons buying sex and communicating with persons selling sex. Most often, persons selling sex advertise on the internet, add their photos and attract persons buying sex. There are also separate portals for establishing sponsored relationships. Portals and dating applications are becoming more and more popular, where sellers and persons buying sex make contact in a less obvious way. Respondents also say that persons selling sex can be found in nightclubs. Additional sexual services can also be purchased in erotic dance clubs, but whether girls dancing also provide sexual services depends on the owners' consent to such practices. Nowadays, there is even a portal in Poland where drivers share information on where roadside women providing sexual services can be found. Finally, many Polish respondents indicated working on webcams as a new form of sex work.

Considering some implications for sexual exploitation, it is evident that the underground sex sector is difficult to control and creates space for exploitative conditions. As one Dutch expert stated: *“I think in that invisible home prostitution, that is exactly where a lot of exploitation takes place (...) where in the past someone was simply behind the windows, which was quite easily monitored, yes, now you have to go to a, eh, a private home, and then you firstly need to figure out, is that really home prostitution, or is there possibly a network there where someone is*



*sitting in that house*" (NL-P8). Similarly, a Dutch buyer explained that increased regulations on home prostitution made it more difficult for persons selling sex to operate within a safe environment and could, moreover, constitute a deterrent for home persons selling sex to report exploitation due to the illegality of their activities: *"it keeps becoming more and more difficult for those ladies to receive customers at home where they feel comfortable, and safe. Right, where the hygiene is good, where they can be checked by the GGD every two months, and yes that just continues decreasing (...) when you are sitting at home, and further you have nothing, and some crazy guy comes in and puts a knife to your throat, then you don't have much to report"* (NL-B2). Other Dutch respondents linked the increasing use of internet and social media to new forms of sexual exploitation: they mentioned the Dark Web as an often-used resource for exploitation.

Regarding the Dutch male prostitution sex work milieu, the researchers found prevalence of facilitating parties. Due to the fact that it was quite difficult to draw a line between domination role game and actual exploitation, it was suspected that there might be exploitation present. Since the sector was quite hidden and stigmatised, persons selling sex were not inclined to report the violent incidents.

In other cases, however, persons selling sex and persons buying sex emphasised that online and home sex work could also make conditions safer for persons selling sex. As one of the Dutch persons selling sex active in webcam modelling stated: *"Very simple, and it was very easy to start off with (...) on twitter you have contact with your colleagues (...) or other webcam performers. But you just, you work alone. So there was never talk about force or coercion or not (...) I did that [online sex work] and I liked it a lot"* (NL-SW4). Dutch municipality workers also mentioned that the internet can provide new possibilities and opportunities: *"I can imagine not having to stand behind the window all day not even being sure to make money, I would rather prefer to get a call and go somewhere. Meanwhile I can do other stuff"* (NL-P5). Regarding private home prostitution, Dutch persons buying sex indicated that *"I've only been to a fairly expensive business where I had the feeling that the women were enjoying themselves and no/little worrisome people (pimps) were around. So if only businesses like these are offered, it could be much safer"* (NL-B9). In other words, among the main reasons for choosing an expensive place was the consideration for the safety and well-being of both the persons selling sex and the persons buying sex.

### **3.2.2. Pornography**

In Croatia and Poland, most respondents do not see any relationship between pornography and the demand for sexual services. In their opinion, there was only a small percentage of people who become motivated by pornography to sell or buy sexual services because it boosts these persons' imagination, or as two Croatian interviewees mentioned: *"People watch it and then they would like to try it"* (HR-P7); *"It gives people ideas for sex work"* (HR-P9). Most Polish respondents emphasised that pornography works on the principle of discharging sexual tension through autoerotic behaviour. However, some Polish experts were concerned that in some cases, pornography could generate an incorrect image of sexuality and arouse the desire to realise new and sometimes dangerous fantasies.

In the Netherlands, where the researchers did not systematically discuss the question of the role of pornography with the respondents, one of them pointed out a similar impact on general perceptions of sex of the increasing accessibility of pornography on the internet: *“I do see that among the youth, the normalisation of the trend, that they are far more open to sex and the conducting of sexual acts. Also due to the increasing accessibility of pornography and films that are accessible online in large amounts. All of it is simply more normalised”* (NL-P8).

### **3.3. Opinions about actions to protect persons selling sex**

#### **3.3.1. Safety and protection as a key issue**

The Dutch and the Croatian teams have found that a focus on safety and protection for persons selling sex has been a bridging point and a way of finding a common narrative with stakeholders from all positions. The general public in the Netherlands and Croatia appeared to agree: a large majority of survey respondents thought that the authorities should provide safety for people that want to sell and buy sex and that the protection of persons selling sex should even be the authorities' main concern.

In Poland, on the contrary, fewer respondents believed that the authorities should provide safety for people that want to sell and buy sex, and this was mainly due to Polish women, who were particularly divided about this question (50% pro – 41% against – 9% preferred not to answer, in contrast with men: 64% pro – 33% against – 3% preferred not to answer). When asked what the main concern of the authorities should be, both men and women in Poland agreed that this should be the 'protection of the legal order' (38%) and the 'protection of the public morals' (23%), while only 18% mentioned the protection of persons selling sex as a priority. Male Polish respondents were the only ones who answered that the 'protection of persons buying sex' should be the main concern of the authorities (6%). In the Netherlands, the group that asked for 'protection of the public interest' was the largest, with 27% of the survey respondents (and 24% responded “don't know”).

From persons selling sex themselves, there was a clear demand for actions that bring more safety and protection. They face important risks and were deeply concerned about their safety. Further, there was a general sense among the interviewees that the safety of persons selling sex is currently decreasing as the sex industry moves underground (see above section 3.2, new forms and trends). Experiences of safety and risks of course differed from one sector of sex work to another. In the Netherlands, the researchers had very contradicting impressions about the safety in Red Light Districts. For instance, the atmosphere in Alkmaar Red Light District, where the street was well monitored by window owners through the street surveillance system, was much more relaxed than in the indoor sex work windows in Leewarden. The latter were not equipped with a street surveillance system and panic buttons.

Persons selling sex did not necessarily refer to their persons buying sex as a source of risk and danger, but they did describe some situations and behaviours of persons buying sex that they found disturbing. For instance, one Dutch sex worker mentioned that: *“Sometimes I felt fear because I was drugged one time (...) and another time they gave me 200 euros and I had*

*to give 150 euro back, and it were false euros*” (NL-SW3). Although the buyer may not necessarily sexually exploit the individual providing sexual services, other behaviours during the interaction can result in negative consequences. For example, this sex worker further mentioned that persons buying sex often encourage workers to take drugs and are willing to incentivise this through higher pay: *“but sometimes people come that also use drugs, and not only they use drugs but they pay more for you to use together with them”* (NL-SW3). Other persons selling sex in the Netherlands mentioned that some persons buying sex were not willing to leave on time and this situation made them feel very uncomfortable. One male sex worker even described a scenario in which he was violently robbed and attacked at his home address. This attack left him bleeding almost to death in his hallway. The perpetrator was a buyer whom he had seen a week earlier and who had come back with a friend to rob him. The friend attacked him with a sickle and stabbed him over twenty times. Some Dutch persons selling sex also referred to violent practices among pimps.

In Croatia, violent persons buying sex were also a key source of worry for persons selling sex, next to financial concerns, lack of prospects for the future, and health. Persons selling sex were aware that sex work is not a lifelong solution and showed concern about losing their income, while lacking perspectives and solutions for their retirement age. One of them mentioned: *“I am afraid because of everything: of someone recognising me, of violent buyers, of other sex workers because relations are disastrous. Of getting old, illness”* (HR-SW9).

It is important to mention that many persons selling sex, from the different countries, indicated having some concern about their health. Several of the interviewed stakeholders confirmed this by stating that it is primarily in health that sex work has negative long-term consequences. Persons selling sex mentioned feeling shame in front of medical staff, having physical diseases and having mental health problems because of their lack of perspective or anxiety and hostility towards their job. In Croatia, these worries were connected with having no health insurance – linked to the illegality of the sector: among the interviewed persons selling sex, a third of the respondents did not have a decent health insurance (none or limited private coverage).

Some interviewees pointed out that it was not easy to achieve greater safety and protection for persons selling sex because it was such a complex issue. One Croatian buyer, for example, stated that, whatever rights are granted to persons selling sex, full protection will never be accomplished, since society will never entirely tolerate and accept persons selling sex (HR-B24). In the Netherlands, two facilitators indicated that better protection can be provided, but that it is of course impossible to nullify all risks, as is the case for other ‘risky’ occupations.

### **3.3.2. Actions to increase safety and protection**

#### **3.3.2.1. The rights of persons selling sex: legal protection and information**

Interviewees from all categories and countries emphasised that actions to increase the safety and protection of persons selling sex should avoid having negative effects on the rights of persons selling sex. The aim must be, as a Dutch expert formulated it, *“to diminish as much as possible the risks involved namely for sex workers, but also for buyers, but keeping the*

*priority about maintaining sex workers' rights"* (NL-P2). Moreover, increasing sex workers' rights, and their knowledge of these rights, was generally viewed as the best strategy to obtain greater safety and protection. This was generally considered as particularly necessary for (undocumented) migrants selling sex (see further).

Polish interviewees, for example, often mentioned that having full rights is what would make persons selling sex feel more safe and secure.<sup>21</sup> They believed that the full legalisation of sex work in Poland would give law enforcement agencies and persons selling sex the necessary tools to combat sexual abuse. Polish respondents also mentioned the need to educate the and sensitise the public to problems of sexual abuse, and to inform persons selling sex better about their rights.<sup>22</sup> One example of other methods of ensuring that persons selling sex can ensure their safety was through self-defence courses: *"If [a] not nice client is demanding, then I can say something like that that he will come out. I finished self-defence course and I praise it very much, girls should take such courses"* (PL-SW10).

Similarly, in Croatia, where sex work is illegal, all groups of interviewees, except law enforcers, were predominantly in favour of legalisation or decriminalisation of prostitution, as a source of protection, because this would provide persons selling sex with labour rights, pensions, health insurance, and relief from police pressure. They argued that legalisation involving state regulation and greater official control over the sector will ensure greater physical protection of persons selling sex (against diseases and violence; public houses, safe zones) and greater protection from procurers and traffickers, thus protecting them from organised crime and becoming victims of trafficking in human beings. Persons buying sex generally supported the demand for increased protection of persons selling, as a universal human right: *"We are all humans regardless of what we do for a living"* (HR-B11).

### **3.3.2.2. Safe spaces**

Creating 'safe spaces' for persons selling sex and their client was often identified as a good strategy, in the first place by persons selling sex themselves. There was, however, not always consensus about what exactly constitutes a safe space, and whether it ought to be a public(ly monitored) space or a private space.

For example, a Polish victim of human trafficking for sexual purposes who has a lot of experience in the sex industry believed that brothels are good and safe places for women as owners protect them and take care of them. So-called 'private entities' (*prywatka*) should be abolished according to this interviewee, since they present a real threat for persons offering sex there. She had been victimised in such a place, by people she knew well.

In the Netherlands, the focus was on public spaces and their surveillance, as the following buyer indicated: *"I am pro safety, and safety is created by letting someone work in a space which is safe, and which is monitored"* (NL-B2). Some experts proposed to have better surveillance and install cameras in the red-light districts. Many experts mentioned that the

<sup>21</sup>PL-SW1, PL-SW2, PL-SW3, PL-SW5, PL-SW8, PL-SW9, PL-SW10, PL-SW14, PL-SW15, PL-B1, PL-B3, PL-B4, PL-B6, PL-B7, PL-E3, PL-E5, PL-E6 PL-E12, PL-E14, PL-E5, PL-E16, PL-E18, PL-E26

<sup>22</sup>PL-SW5, PL-SW13, PL-SW14, PL-SW15, PL-B6, PL-B8, PL-E19, PL-E15, PL-E11, PL-E13, PL-E9, PL-E18, PL-E10, PL-E21, PL-E22, PL-E23.

recent closing of public premises in many municipalities and the resulting move of sex work to private homes and apartments has made the sector more unsafe, and more difficult to monitor. This was especially the case for the gay prostitution scene. One Dutch expert (NL-LE8) recommended the creation of 'love hotels', where persons selling sex can take their persons buying sex to neutral grounds and provide their services in a safe and monitored space. In this way, they would be able to organise to meet persons buying sex for an hour or two and have both their safety and that of their buyer guaranteed.

#### **3.3.2.3. *Protection against pimps and third parties who facilitate sex work***

In all categories of respondents there was a clear negative attitude towards procurers and agents, who are generally perceived as 'parasites' and the main source of exploitation of prostitutes, as well as an additional risk for the safety of persons selling sex. Some persons selling sex testified that procurers and agents keep them imprisoned or bound to them through fictitious debts, as if having signed 'a contract with the devil'. As a Croatian sex worker explained: *"They are all fraud. You can turn out bad only with them. First, they approach you with promises, buy you a wardrobe, cellphones, and later ask you to return money for all, and accuse you for stealing from them. If you become worse at what you do, they become violent and then the real hell begins with them"* (HR-SW9).

Croatian stakeholders also perceived procurers and agents mostly as criminals, but they disagreed on how sex work would change if procurers are not involved: policy makers mostly believed that it would decrease, while most law enforcers thought that this would not make a difference. In Poland, an important distinction was made between exploiters and facilitators. Respondents all agreed to punish the exploiters, but many shared the opinion that facilitators should be legalised. According to these respondents, criminalising the facilitators would not protect persons selling sex against exploitation in any way, but rather exposes them to exploitation, because it pushes the organisation of prostitution into the grey zone. Respondents say that if the organisers could act legally, persons selling sex would have more opportunities to claim their rights under labour law. Currently, Polish persons selling sex were left to deal with violations of their labour rights on their own, because it was too difficult to gather all the evidence required for filing an official complaint with the police.

#### **3.3.2.4. *Specific protection and assistance for (undocumented) migrants***

Respondents from the different countries indicated that migrants, especially undocumented ones who are newcomers and do not master the language of the country, were the most in need of protection and assistance.

In the Netherlands, persons selling sex advocated for a better knowledge of their rights for newcomers to the industry and immigrants selling sex in particular, so that they can stand up for themselves. Further, some see the lack of possibilities to officially hire persons selling sex from abroad as one of the problems that is pushing the sector underground. One Dutch activist proposed to establish a so-called employment agency that might assist potential persons



selling sex who live abroad with their documents and provide necessary information about their rights and the risks involved in sex work: *“Employment agency, maybe (...) if the conditions are not good, then the worker can just go back to the employment agency submit a complaint, and then they will never send out to that brothel again (...) you can inform people, you can help them to save money”* (NL-P1).

### **3.3.3. Who should protect persons selling sex**

#### **3.3.3.1. Role of persons buying sex**

Persons selling sex were often relatively positive about those who buy sexual services from them, who they described as sympathetic, empathic, coming to them not only for sex, but sometimes simply to talk about what is bothering them. Moreover, several persons selling sex described persons buying sex as important sources of support or help in times of crisis, or even for getting out of the industry (yet at same time, violent persons buying sex are identified as a major risk, see above). Several interviewed persons buying sex in different countries indicated that if they knew that the women were forced to provide sexual services, they would not use these services. This was clearly what the general public in the three countries also expected from persons buying sex: a majority of survey respondents (more than 80% in Croatia and Poland) thought that persons buying sex should ensure that the persons they were buying sex from were not doing so against their will.

However, as indicated in previous DESIRE findings, whilst overall the issue of demand must be viewed as demand for sexual services, there was, in some cases, a demand for exploitative sexual services.<sup>23</sup> This emerged from the testimonies of the two victims of trafficking for sexual purposes in Poland, who clearly stated that they were sexually abused by persons buying sex who knew well that they were forced to serve them, but who did not bother. They were repeatedly raped by pimps and persons buying sex and were forced to provide sexual services all day long: *“There was one customer who realised [that she was a victim], he got up, got dressed and went out, he said he would not participate. But there were a lot of customers and it did not bother them, I remember even one who raped me so much that he did wounds to me, I was bleeding from the vagina and from the anus. I cried, I begged him to stop, but it just seemed to ‘turn him on’ (...) I remember my older buyers best, they were delicate and needed intimacy. They were different buyers”* (PL-V01). The other Polish victim stated: *“When I was working, I had cool buyers, I’m honest. I am an open person. And that does not mean that when they came, it was about sex, there was a lot to talk about, to complain. It was only these two months that I felt what it meant to be sexually abused and do something forcibly”* (PL-V02).

#### **3.3.3.2. Role of law enforcement agencies**

The accounts of Polish and Croatian interviewees indicated a dual role of the police, that were both seen as a repressive agent (often by persons selling sex themselves, who complain often about police harassment), threatening them, but at the same time, the police were described as first resort when persons selling sex have a problem (both by those involved in sex work

<sup>23</sup>Deliverable No. 1.4: Report on Demand for Sexual Services that can fuel Sexual Exploitation in the Context of Human Trafficking (June 2017), p.11.



and by experts or other third parties e.g. the general public). This was important to highlight because the police are crucial in the implementation of the law and policies, especially in these two domestic settings where a restrictive legal and policy framework exists whereby in Croatia, the provision of sex services is criminalised<sup>24</sup> and in Poland despite the non-penalisation of persons selling sex, sex work is not regulated as a formal part of the labour market.<sup>25</sup>

The general public in Croatia appeared to share this dual perception of the role of the authorities and law enforcement in the protection of persons selling sex against exploitation. Whereas an overwhelming majority believed that the authorities *should* help persons selling sex if needed (90%) and *can* do anything to stop people from being engaged in selling sex against their will (86%), only 43% of Croatian survey respondents believed that the authorities *will* actually help when they are called by persons who are forced to sell sex. Apart from that, many responded “don’t know”, which also suggests a lack of trust in the authorities. Remarkably, mostly women doubted that the authorities will offer help when called upon, not only in Croatia, but in the Netherlands as well. In both countries, half of the female survey respondents thought that persons who are forced to sell sex cannot call the authorities for help, or they have doubt about this (22% of women in Croatia and 37% (!) of Dutch women respond “don’t know”). In Poland, on the contrary, both men and women displayed high levels of trust in the authorities, thinking not only that they should and can help persons forced to sell sex, but also that authorities *will* do so when called upon (72% of Polish men and 67% of Polish women).

In Croatia, the doubts whether public law enforcement could help persons selling sex when they would like to exit sex work result from an overall lack of trust in public institutions, that rests on the belief that corruption, dishonesty and nepotism are widespread or that these institutions lack the power and resources to help. Several persons selling sex interviewed in Croatia felt that the police bring more damage than support and are afraid of being prosecuted. One sex worker shared the experience that a policeman intimidated her to tell her family everything about her activities as sex worker. However, in cases of emergency and danger for their lives, most persons selling sex would go to the police for protection. Experts in Croatia shared some of the doubts of persons selling sex but display higher levels of trust in the police and public institutions as being neutral, fair, accountable, and efficient in providing help, in particular for exiting the sector.

In Poland, when it comes to reporting irregularities to the police, the opinions of persons selling sex differ. Those who already reported problems to the police in the past received help and feel safer now. On the contrary, those persons selling sex who declared that in case of danger they would be afraid to go to the police— mainly because of stories told by others – that the police will reveal their data to the perpetrator, consider the case too much trouble, or not perceive them as credible or as real victims because of their profession. Some mentioned the unprofessional approach of the police, the lack of empathy on their part. One expert even talked about a girl who was raped by police officers when she came to report being raped. Regarding the public authorities and the government in general, Polish persons selling sex

<sup>24</sup>Deliverable No. 2.3: Legal and regulatory approaches towards sex work in four EU-countries, p.19-21.

<sup>25</sup> Deliverable No. 2.3: Legal and regulatory approaches towards sex work in four EU-countries, p. 25.

displayed greater trust than their Croatian counterparts and had relatively high expectations: they claimed that if the state would publicise the problem of human trafficking in the sex industry, control the sex business more effectively, and give more priority to the punishment of perpetrators, problems in the sex industry could be reduced to a minimum. These higher expectations and levels of trust towards public authorities could also be found among the Polish general public, as was mentioned already earlier.

### **3.3.3.3. *Role of civil society***

If emphasis is placed on safety and protection of persons selling sex, regardless of the regulatory approach, it is important to pay attention to the role of NGO's as service providers as well as that of other civil society actors. Persons selling sex themselves generally prefer to deal with threats on their own, but from civil society organisations, they expect health support, aid in the prevention of STD's and additional education about their rights. Respondents from different countries, especially the victims, indicate that civil society organisations can also play a crucial role in helping persons selling sex in exiting the sex industry and helping victims of sexual exploitation and /or trafficking in particular (with finding shelter, housing, a job, welfare benefits, etc).

In Croatia and in Poland, however, interviewees expressed quite some doubts regarding the role that civil society organisations can and should play. In Croatia, most interviewees did not trust NGOs, while in Poland, interviewees also did not place any serious hope in civil society. Very few Polish experts expressed the opinion that NGOs should play an active role in the prevention of human trafficking and in supporting persons selling sex. Some of them admitted that in general, civil society in Poland is very weak, so it is quite understandable that there are not many NGOs active in the struggle against forced prostitution and trafficking. Only one statement of a Polish persons selling sex can be read as a clear expectation that there will be NGOs that will effectively protect women offering sexual services.

The online survey result showed that among the general public, knowledge of NGOs active in the sex industry is the highest in Poland. Overall, Croatian respondents appeared to be not well informed about the kind of help that civil society organisations can provide: only 8% mention safe shelter, followed by counselling (7%), legal assistance (6%) and health care (5%). This was in great contrast with the high awareness of Dutch respondents about the activities of NGOs and other service providers in this field: 82% mentioned health care, 68% safe shelter, 63% legal assistance, 61% counselling, 22% skills training and 9% employment. Polish respondents have reasonable knowledge, more than the Croatian public, and mention counselling (76%), legal assistance (74%), safe shelter (51%), health care (44%), skills training (13%) and employment (9%).

## **4. Sexual exploitation and human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation**

Once an understanding of the contextual understanding of sex work in Croatia, Poland and the Netherlands was established, the respondents were asked about their understanding of sexual exploitation (section 4.1), understanding of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation (section 4.2) and the exploitative strategies used by persons buying sex and facilitators to perpetuate the sexual exploitation of persons selling sex (section 4.3).

### **4.1. Understanding of sexual exploitation**

#### **4.1.1. Link between prostitution and sexual exploitation**

In Croatia, the Netherlands and Poland, all categories of interviewees tended to make a clear distinction between sex work on the one hand, and sexual exploitation on the other. The latter was generally considered as a very different, highly problematic phenomenon that incidentally and rather exceptionally took place within the sex industry. Some Polish experts, however, argued that any form of sexual contact in exchange for money or other benefits can be considered as sexual exploitation (PL-E1, PL-E7, PL-E25). Among the general public, in the Netherlands, 77% of the respondents thought that sex work is often (32%) or sometimes (45%) a form of sexual exploitation. In Croatia, 80% had the same opinion, but the group that thinks that this was often the case was much bigger (47%), while 31% thought that there was sex work was sometimes a form of sexual exploitation. In Poland, only about 60% thought that sex work was often (29%) or sometimes (30%) a form of sexual exploitation, while 11% believed that this was almost never or never the case.

#### **4.1.2. Definition of sexual exploitation**

In Croatia and Poland, the issues of sexual exploitation and human trafficking were not set enough on the public agenda. Because of the lack of public debate, Polish interviewees struggled with the notion of sex work and how the concept of sexual exploitation should be understood. They had serious problems defining the concept and linked it with the notion of 'acting against someone's will'.<sup>26</sup> This notion is very broad, it also refers to private sexual relations. Interviewees also referred to rape or the use of unconsciousness, "*get the girl drunk and then use her*" (PL-B2). Moreover, respondents spoke about intimate relationships in general, only some referred directly to paid sexual services (that sexual exploitation is an attempt to extort actions other than those for which the contract was concluded, or forced prostitution by a pimp), and few (2 experts, PL-E10, PL-E1) combined sexual exploitation only with the sexual use of children, suggesting that an adult person cannot be used (or had not thought about it at the time of the study). Only few respondents said that this was "*taking advantage of women's disadvantage, helplessness and bad situation*" (PL-SW01, PL-E23, PL-E17, PL-E13). The Polish researchers emphasised that this problem should be the subject of further separate research.

<sup>26</sup> PL-E3, PL-E5, PL-E8, PL-E13, PL-E15, PL-E18, PL-E19, PL-E21, PL-E22, PL-E25, PL-B1, PL-B6, PL-SW2, PL-SW3, PL-SW4, PL-SW8, PL-SW13, PL-SW14, PL-SW15

In Croatia and the Netherlands, definitions of sexual exploitation given by the interviewees often shared an economic dimension – with many references to exploitation for economic benefits or financial gain and to labour exploitation through breach of contract, with holding pay, unprotected work – on the one hand, and to coercion and violence on the other hand. In combination, the elements of economic/labour exploitation and coerced work directly tie in with the classical notion of ‘slavery’, that is also frequently used by the respondents. A Dutch sex worker, for example, defined a victim of sexual exploitation as *“someone who works as a sex slave against his or her will”* (NL-SW13). Males selling sex in the Netherlands also combined both notions when defining exploitation: *“threatening with contract breach, being assaulted, the withholding of pay”* (NL-SW11).

In Poland, only two conditions of sexual exploitation were mentioned by more than half of the survey respondents: physical abuse by persons buying sex and physical abuse by pimp. In Croatia, members of the general public mentioned various conditions, from physical abuse and threats by persons buying sex or pimps, to the requirement of handing over wages to pimps or facilitators and forced sex: they appeared to be well informed about sexual exploitation or at least very concerned about the risks for exploitation involved in sex work. This was also the case in the Netherlands, but here there was even more variation: handing over wages to pimps was the least mentioned (52%), while all other conditions were mentioned by around 70% of the survey respondents.

The fact that pimps appeared as sources of sexual exploitation in the survey results corresponded to the earlier mentioned opinion of interviewees from the three countries that pimps played a major role in sexual exploitation, both in terms of financial exploitation and physical abuse (see section 3.3.2.3. protection against pimps). As a Dutch sex worker put it: *“What I hear from women who have worked with a pimp is that it isn’t the work that ruins it, but the pimp that is taking her money (...) So I would rather call that financial exploitation”* (NL-SW5). Another illustration of this opinion was the following quote of a Dutch buyer, when asked about his views on sexual exploitation: *“pimps exploit women purely to make a profit (...) they [women] are coerced into working and do not do it autonomously and that they live in fear for their lives due to those guys”* (NL-B7).

A particularity for the Netherlands, was that regarding the role of pimps in the male sex industry and regarding certain facilitators, several persons selling sex and persons buying sex who were interviewed also displayed more positive opinions and did not necessarily place them in the role of exploiters. In contrast, several Dutch interviewees identified brothel/window owners and house-keepers (high rents) and municipality regulations (high taxes) as being the main exploiters.

When persons buying sex were asked about sexual exploitation, they often dissociated themselves from the sex industry and operated with very general facts, while minimising the place of sexual exploitation in sex work and citing examples of sexual exploitation in other contexts, such as *“women that are married and where the husband doesn’t work (...) the man lives on what she brings in”* (NL-B2). For them, this was a way to indicate that there is no demand for sexual exploitation coming from them.

Regarding the prevalence of sexual exploitation, a large part of the general public in all three countries claimed to be aware that there are people engaged in selling sex against their will: 93% of Dutch, 86% of Polish and 77% of Croatian survey respondents. Among the interviewed persons buying sex, in contrast, opinions varied greatly. In the Netherlands, for instance, persons buying sex gave the following answers to the question 'Do you think sexual exploitation is common in prostitution in The Netherlands?':

- NL-B12: "Yes, it is common (50-60%)"
- NL-B13: "It's far less common than generally assumed"
- NL-B14: "Yes because it's a dubious sector, and that attracts criminality"
- NL-B15: "I consciously do not go to Eastern European prostitutes"
- NL-B16: "Pimps, human traffickers and racketeers in window prostitution are the biggest exploiters (...) Although pimps and human traffickers exist, I don't think they are common"
- NL-B17: "This happens a lot in The Netherlands. The heroin hookers"
- NL-B9: "I know little of that"
- NL-B11: "Little"

There can be many reasons for such a variety of opinions, such as, for instance, the exposure to the media and news. However, it could also be due to the varied interpretation of the concept of sexual exploitation, and the unclear definitions that are often provided. Finally, it was difficult to define something that one has never been exposed to. For instance, a Dutch buyer who has very limited experience with buying sexual services mentioned the following: "I know very little about that. I think that when you are not in that environment, you hear very little about it. Of course, there are stories about pimps and loverboys, only, I am not exposed to this really" (NL-B7).

## **4.2. Understanding of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation**

### **4.2.1. Definitions of human trafficking**

In all the countries, many interviewees expected that persons buying sex see sexual exploitation and human trafficking as interchangeable. Like the term sexual exploitation, human trafficking is often associated with labour exploitation and the notion of 'slavery' or forced labour, treating people as a commodity and a source of income. On top of that, human trafficking was often associated with organised crime. Croatian experts, for example, described human trafficking as "lucrative work done by criminals" (HR-E4), "the worst part of the human psyche" (HR-E7), and "international organized crime" (HR-E10).

In the Netherlands, human trafficking for sexual exploitation was the most strongly linked with labour exploitation, although the term is used separately in the legislation. As one expert illustrated: "I think as I said earlier sexual exploitation for me is not different from labour exploitation, so I think it should not be treated separately (...) but according to the Dutch Law if you underpay someone as an employer it is a different law from trafficking" (NL-P2). All persons selling sex are self-employed, therefore, there is no labour inspection unless workers



are employed in massage parlours. Nevertheless, although the industry is legal, there are no real labour standards or collectives for persons selling sex and it is difficult to implement labour standards since Dutch persons selling sex are self-employed entrepreneurs. As a result, it is difficult to determine when exactly exploitative working conditions occur specifically because there is no nationally or internationally accepted definition of exploitation. The lack of standardised norms complicates the assessment of when a situation qualifies as exploitation. A Dutch municipality official stated regarding these difficulties that *"I think if they are heavily underpaid, for instance, limited in their movement, we will define them as victims, even though they themselves would say that I earn a lot more than in my own country and I am not a victim. It is difficult because those victims who do not see themselves as such will probably not report a crime easily to the police"* (NL-P4).

The confusion between sexual exploitation and human trafficking in the Netherlands also results from a very broad interpretation of human trafficking in the country's counter-trafficking legislation: if someone brings a sex worker across the border illegally with the aim of exploitation, even when this is entirely consensual, this is interpreted as trafficking in human beings. It is thus not surprising that persons selling sex themselves provided such situations as examples of trafficking (for instance NL-SW12, when asked whether he had noticed indicators of human trafficking within the male sex work milieu). As a result, there was quite some confusion in the Netherlands about what exactly constitutes exploitation and what constitutes the roles of consent and coercion. For example, if persons selling sex agree to pay high prices for the rooms or follow the rules, but still consider such prices and rules as exploitative, then consequently exploitation might be viewed as consensual. Also, in some cases, when persons selling sex are coerced psychologically or when they consensually give their earning to boyfriends or pimps, these situations might be considered as exploitative by some persons selling sex but as 'normal' by others. For instance, one sex worker mentioned that: *"it has been totally mixed for me now. It is really not as clear cut. And that gets to the whole trafficking thing, and I always challenge people on like force and how there are degrees of force and coercion. Because I think there is a big difference between a guy who, like some random guy who helped you get here and will beat you, or if you don't do what he says he will give you less money, versus an emotionally abusive boyfriend. Who you do willingly but you give your money too, because you love him. You know, you could argue that both of those are situations of exploitation. So for me, it can be very broad"* (NL-SW11).

#### **4.2.2. Perceptions of the prevalence/existence of human trafficking**

Although the notions sexual exploitation and trafficking were often used interchangeably in all three countries, trafficking was generally viewed as a much more incidental and exceptional phenomenon. Especially persons selling sex sometimes indicated that it is a 'movie story' or a fiction, and that it did not exist in their social setting. As one of the Polish persons selling sex who was asked about her understanding of the issue of human trafficking stated: *"It is most often the exportation of women outside of the country to take advantage of forcing them to prostitution (...) I did not hear that such a problem existed in Poland"* (PL-SW04).

Several persons selling sex and persons buying sex in the Netherlands distanced themselves explicitly from the idea of persons selling sex as victims of exploitation as well as from the



trafficking discourse: they blamed it for generating a false narrative in which these distinct phenomena appear to be always interlinked, thereby fostering a kind of 'moral panic'. For example, a Dutch expert proposed to eliminate the word trafficking and focus on the word exploitation instead: *"we could eliminate the word trafficking and if we could just go with the word exploitation because it's a so much cleaner word. I mean you can just define together what exploitation means and then you wouldn't have this whole moral big heavy discourse behind"* (NL-P9).

One of the Polish persons selling sex also suggested that some kind of 'moral panic' about sexual exploitation and trafficking was dominating many public debates and policies: *"As for blackmail and slavery, the percentage of slaves in sex in the industry is much smaller than, for example, when growing tomatoes in Italy or producing t-shirts in China (...) and no one is taking actions against the consumption of tomatoes"* (forumer 8 – see annex). From this and several other statements, it appeared that some Polish persons selling sex were frustrated by the perception of sex work as a sector of increased risk of human trafficking. Instead, they argued that the sex industry has changed for the better over the years. A Dutch escort sex worker was even more critical towards the trafficking discourse: *"Sex workers are labelled as 'victims' and are therefore silenced. Laws intended to combat human trafficking are being misused to hunt whores"* (NL-SW13). Also, all Dutch academics and activists suggested that it was important to clearly define exploitation and somehow move beyond the trafficking discourse that is rather moralistic than practical, to focus more on exploitation in the sex industry, and to improve labour conditions whenever exploitation takes place. Service providers further mentioned that it was also important to tackle exploitation that not necessarily corresponds with the trafficking definition.

#### **4.2.3. Interviewees' depictions of victims of human trafficking**

In all the countries, the depictions that interviewees gave of the profile of (potential) victims of trafficking for sexual purposes shared specific gender and age dimensions: generally, young females and children with a low socio-economic status and low education were identified as being the most at-risk group. Further, interviewees also indicated a migration background as a common feature of trafficking victims. Several Croatian interviewees, for example, mentioned that travelling groups, in particular Roma children and women coming from the countryside, become the victims of trafficking. However, this issue was often left unattended by presenting it as something that is "part of their culture" and mostly happening in the domestic sphere, so nothing that public authorities should get involved in. This is a topic that requires further analysis. Croatian stakeholders believed that victims mostly come from the countries surrounding Croatia, from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro to the Balkan region in general, as well as from Ukraine or Moldova.

One Polish victim of trafficking shared that she migrated abroad because of a job offer in England, and ended up being trafficked, where she felt extremely vulnerable because she did not have any financial means, knowledge of the language, support networks nor experience in the sex industry: *"The vision of being in a foreign country, I do not know where to go, I do not know the language and I do not have any money with me, it was just as scary"* (PL-V01).

### 4.3. Exploitation Strategies

Interviewees mostly described the strategies used in sexual exploitation as a combination of rewards and punishments or using a 'bait strategy'. In all the countries, interviewees mentioned that exploiters used promises about a better future, jobs, earnings or at first provide financial or material resources. After this, a period of coercion, blackmail and threats generally follows, with an addition of violence, imprisonment or abduction. It was striking that often family members, friends, partners or other close persons help exploiters, while the victim trusted them. Interviewees also mentioned, as was already mentioned above, that exploiters were part of a complex criminal web that operates internationally. Another method can be to make your victim fall in love. One of the Polish experts mentioned that an exploiter is usually a good psychologist, looking for weaker people to manipulate them.

Since it was quite difficult to derive sufficiently detailed information from such a small sample considering the strategies used by exploiters, the Dutch researchers focused on the question of who the interviewees deem as exploiters. The answers about who was exploiting assisted persons selling sex guided the question about how this exploitation indeed manifested. Two main and quite general strategies were identified. The first was psychological coercion, which is quite difficult to detect and, moreover, is not always acknowledged by the victims or potential victims, as the following respondent explained: *"for, eh, that group, there is also violence in the game, but is more a psychological game also of dependence, interdependence, being sort of brainwashed about, this is also what you want, you are really good at this, getting messages across from the perpetrator to the victim that they are part of it and that they actually, as if that is something that they would want or participate in from their free will"* (NL-P13). Second, a representative of a Dutch NGO in the Northern provinces stated that pimps use drug addiction of persons selling sex to manipulate them, but that this was especially prevalent in the street prostitution sectors (tipplezones). However, the latter can also have psychological coercion of getting into drug addiction.

As major motivation for sexual exploitation, almost all respondents in the different countries pointed at economic reasons: financial gain by paying the forced persons selling sex less or nothing compared to regular sex work, by migrating with victims to areas with a higher demand for sexual services, or by forcing victims to engage in unprotected or violent sex, and having the persons buying sex pay huge extras for this. The Dutch team found that in some cases, sexual services being provided without condoms for higher prices increased competition in the entire market: it pushed other girls to provide similar services and engage in risky behaviour.. Such demands were maybe not directly exploitative, but indirectly, they forced persons selling sex into taking risks for their health and well-being.

When it comes to the role of persons buying sex, several interviewees believed that persons buying sex often knew it when a sex worker was a victim of sexual exploitation and trafficking, but usually chose to ignore this or simply agree to buy sexual services for a lower price. These interviewees, but also the large majority of survey respondents in the three countries, thought that persons buying sex should take responsibility and avoid sexual services from victims (see section 3.3.3.). Others, however, mentioned that, the lower the price for sexual services, the greater chance that it attracts customers who do not care about the well-being and safety of

the persons selling sex. Persons buying sex themselves, on the contrary, as was mentioned earlier already and applies to the three countries examined, generally indicated that they do not accept persons selling sex being forced and coerced into sex without having the choice to refuse certain clients and services.

## **5. Laws and Policies**

Finally, the respondents were asked about their knowledge of the national legal and policy framework regulating the sex industry in order to begin to determine the best ways in which the various regulatory regimes could prevent human trafficking for sexual exploitation and/or sexual exploitation within the sex industry. It must be noted that a limited connection between sex work and human trafficking has emerged from the data, meaning that it was difficult to make conclusions regarding the effects of legislation and policy on human trafficking for sexual exploitation. Overall, the complexity of the matter makes it difficult, if not impossible, to prove causation between laws and human trafficking. On the other hand, however, certain regulative approaches, in the Netherlands for example, have clearly been shaped or inspired by the trafficking discourse, so in these cases, there certainly was a clear connection.

### **5.1. Knowledge of the national legal and policy framework regulating the sex industry**

All respondents were asked about their knowledge of the current legal framework which regulates the sex industry.<sup>27</sup> Overall, members of the general public appeared to have only limited knowledge of the legal and policy framework in their country, in this sense that most seem to know aspects of it, but not the entire framework. Knowledge was higher in the Netherlands than in Croatia and in Poland, where a remarkably high proportion mistakenly responded that the selling of and buying sex is illegal. This could be due to the relative complexity (partial criminalisation) of the Polish system where benefiting from, inducing and facilitating the prostitution of others is prohibited.

Persons selling sex were mostly familiar with the existing legal framework, some of them through earlier contacts with the police, paying fines, registering, etc. In all countries, however, regular or irregular migrants selling sex who fear being identified by the police and migration authorities were much less informed, while they were the most vulnerable for exploitation. In Poland, for example, this was the case for persons selling sex from Bulgaria involved in so called 'road prostitution': these women had very limited legal knowledge of Polish law in general and of their rights, so probably also ignored how the authorities can protect them against sexual exploitation. In the Netherlands, males selling sex active in online chatrooms were equally minimally informed about the rules and regulations of the sex industry. It could be argued that this may be due to a lack of interest among male persons selling sex in the implementation of the law, but further research is required to draw any conclusions on this point.

It does not come as a surprise that victims' knowledge of the legal framework was often limited as well, or only increased after becoming a victim and entering support or exit programs. In

<sup>27</sup> Croatia: Misdemeanours against Public Order Act (MAPOA) Official Gazette nos. 5/90, 30/90, 47/90, 29/94; The Netherlands, General Local Regulation of municipalities (APV), available at: <https://vng.nl/onderwerpenindex/veiligheid/prostitutie/brieven/nieuw-prostitutiehoofdstukmodel-apv> and where appropriate Bill for Regulation of Prostitution and Suppression of Abuse in the Sex Industry, or WRP. Poland : Article 203 & 204, Chapter XXV Crimes against sexual freedom and decency, Criminal Code.

Poland, none of the victims interviewed had any knowledge of the legal regulations related to sex work. One victim even declared that providing sex services in Poland is a crime, which is not true. Another victim stated that she has never been interested whether provision of sex services is legal or illegal in Poland. According to her judgment, services offered in brothels are legal while activity of the private spaces (flats being rented by women girls individually) are not.

One migrant sex worker in Poland declared that she heard from policemen that she could provide sex services because this is not prohibited in Poland. This example shows that police can play an important role in increasing social and legal awareness among persons selling sex (see section 5.4, proposals to prevent trafficking and sexual exploitation). In Poland, this is also a task for other institutions, however there was a general lack of knowledge regarding the legal framework of sex work in Polish civil society, because of a lack of appropriate sexual education in general.

Most of the experts, from all the countries, knew the legal framework regarding sex work quite well, especially those representing law enforcement bodies, NGOs and other service providers and academics, especially in places where the prostitution market was considerably big. Some Polish policy makers, however, were not familiar with legal regulations. This may not necessarily mean that they do not pay attention to the issue, but rather that they were never confronted with it, as it did not exist in public debate. In the Netherlands, the huge amount of and variety in municipal regulations meant that some service providers and outreach workers were not informed about very specific regulations or rules that are targeting, for instance, brothel owners. There was also a difference between respondents who work in the victim care and the ones who work with prostitution policy. Service providers who work in the victim support fields, especially those providing health care, were mostly familiar with human-trafficking legislation and procedures and might be less concerned about actual municipal regulations.

In Croatia, Poland and the Netherlands, about half of the interviewed persons buying sex did not know the legal framework regarding sex work in their country or they were not interested in this topic. As one Polish buyer indicated, he simply buys sexual services and does not pay attention to the legal framework of this activity. In the Netherlands as well, the researchers observed that despite the fact that the majority of buyer respondents had a Dutch nationality, they were not necessarily aware of the municipal policy concerning the sex industry since it did not directly target them. Facilitators interviewed in The Hague, on the contrary, had quite an extensive knowledge about the sex work regulations in The Hague and other cities with big sex work markets (e.g. Utrecht).

## **5.2. Opinions about existing law and policy regulating the sex industry**

Overall, in all the countries, views on how the sex industry should be regulated tended to differ; there was no consensus in society and often, there even was a strong polarisation, that also transpired in the positions and conflicts of experts-stakeholders (see earlier).

### 5.2.1. General evaluation of the law

Several experts, persons selling sex and persons buying sex interviewed in Croatia, the Netherlands and Poland believed that the existing legal framework in their country did not significantly influence the functioning of the sex industry. For instance, one of the Dutch persons buying sex (NL-B9) pinpointed that legalisation does not change much in regard with exploitation because literally: *“bad people will continue to do bad things”* In Poland, one sex worker stated that: *“These are dead regulations, they do not give much. Girls will deny that they have a pimp, so the police will not do anything”* (PL-SW05). One Polish expert explained that the *“inclination to prostitution or facilitating prostitution rarely ends in a court because the prosecutor's office is not interested. Prostitutes often change their testimonies. Even if, as a police, we really wanted to make some difference for prostitution, there is very little we can do. Here in Warsaw in the previous year there were only 2 accusations”* (PL-E05). Croatian interviewees similarly stated about the existing legislation: *“It takes too long to make a judicial decision”* (HR-E2), *“insufficient and not applicable”* (HR-B12), *“It is not carried out consistently but arbitrarily”* (HR-B26), and *“Pure laughter. How many policemen are the clients?!”* (HR-SW2).

Many interviewees shared the opinion that the sex industry will exist no matter what and view it as a kind of ‘social constant’, whether the selling or buying of sexual services is legalised or penalised. Therefore, several of them, especially persons selling sex themselves, doubt whether legislation can make important changes. A Croatian sex worker stressed that prostitution or trafficking legislation cannot take away the poverty that is *“worse than the stigma of sex work”* (HR-P8).<sup>28</sup> When asked whether they agreed with the statement that sex work is inevitable – cf. the above mentioned idea of sex work as a ‘social constant’ – members of the general public in Poland and the Netherlands mostly agreed (67%) or were undecided (20%). The opinions of Croatian survey respondents were remarkably different, however: only 33% agreed, while 37% disagreed or were undecided (30%).

### 5.2.2. Dissatisfaction with existing laws, policies and practices of law enforcement

In Croatia, the Netherlands and Poland there appeared to be significant dissatisfaction with the existing laws and law enforcement practices among the various groups of interviewees. In Croatia and Poland, negative attitudes towards the law appeared to be linked to a more general distrust in public authorities and institutions, as was already mentioned earlier. In Croatia, some key criticisms were: inconsistency among different acts, lack of public resources to improve peoples’ lives, and a general sense of corruption. In Poland, most interviewees were in favour of legislative change in the sense of a legalisation of the sex industry, but fear that this would not be obtained, not only because Polish society is too conservative to handle such a change, but also because they thought that Polish authorities would refuse any public debate on the subject or might abuse the opportunity to tighten the law on prostitution.

<sup>28</sup> “Na žalost ne, jer je stigma siromaštva jača” (IVA-8).



In Croatia, there was a general sense that the legal frame generated injustice and was inappropriate: the sex work legislation was viewed as overly punitive - much like other Croatian criminal law and penalties. Regarding law enforcement, the opinion prevailed that it was not consistent and that it served only political ends: there was an unjust selection of who will be punished, whereby so called 'elite prostitution' was not subjected to prosecution, while street sex work usually was under police and court pressure. Further, there was an experience of police and court corruption in a sense that law enforcement depended on a personal connection. In general, there were no clear dynamics of law enforcement and the law was enforced only sporadically, when it brings political points. Croatian law enforcement officers mostly thought that the enforcement of the law was satisfactory or did not want to comment, while NGO representatives had the most critics, mentioning inconsistency in the implementation, overly long procedures, a bad regulatory framework in general, and penalties that were too soft for certain very problematic cases.

In Poland, most of the persons selling sex, persons buying sex and experts were also very critical when asked about the implementation of the law regulating sex work. The reasons provide for this varied, however, law enforcement officers mentioned difficulties in conducting investigations and proving 'pimping' and facilitation of sex work. Others, mostly experts and persons selling sex, criticised law enforcement bodies for not giving enough priority to the fighting of pimping – e.g. full enforcement of the Polish legislation. Prosecutors especially were reluctant to deal with such cases if the evidence was not very strong, as one of the Polish persons selling sex indicated. Much more attention was paid by them to forced prostitution and trafficking for sexual exploitation but not to pimping as such. Moreover, some Polish persons selling sex and experts suggested that escort agencies are controlled by the Police and that the police do nothing deliberately. There are plenty of escort agencies in Poland and everybody knows what they offer, including Police and Border Guards controlling them, yet no one was proposing to shut down these 'institutions'.

In the Netherlands, negative attitudes towards public authorities and dissatisfaction with the existing regulation policies (on municipal level concerning sex work sectors) were also present. Respondents from different backgrounds (service providers, persons selling sex, academics) mentioned the so-called 'over-regulation' and 'over-protection' of the licensed sex industry (too many "nitpicky rules", NL-SW4, and too many taxes to pay) and 'under-regulation' of newer or illegal sectors such as escort services and home sex work especially concerning the lack of legal possibilities to provide sex services at home. At the same time, service providers from the Northern provinces mentioned the under-regulation of all prostitution sectors and the lack of surveillance of the sex work premises. Further, Dutch respondents stated that new and more repressive policies only foster more unsafety and precarity among persons selling sex (e.g. the closing of the street prostitution zones all across the country), and that there was too much variation in municipal regulations on sex work as well as in their implementation.

Several Dutch respondents expressed dissatisfaction regarding what they view as increasing control over the sector, as one buyer stated: *"I think to myself, what do you want as government? You want to get a share of the income because you want tax. It is the same with cigarettes and alcohol and petrol, but the government is the big winner of it because they keep*

*grabbing more money. But you also want to ban it"* (NL-B2). Persons selling sex and persons buying sex also expressed the opinion that policy makers are working from too much distance and disregard the realities in the field. As one buyer put it: *"It is all invented by people who are very distant from the practical context (...) I think they are missing the mark and are confronting it incorrectly"* (NL-B2).

In the Netherlands, policies were not only fragmented across municipalities, but in some cases were simply lacking: not all Dutch municipalities had policies for escorts and even fewer municipalities had developed policies for persons selling sex who provide services at home. One of the reasons was that municipalities can also purposefully choose to implement "zero sex work policy" to seemingly eliminate legal sex work premises on their territory. Persons selling sex in these sectors complained about this: *"I think there should simply be clear rules about it. How and what"* (NL-SW6). On the other hand, in some municipalities where home sex work was clearly regulated, registration costs were quite high, and registration was viewed as invasive for personal privacy.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, some persons selling sex prefer working illegally. As one of them stated: *"by making it partly legal, you are making another part illegal. In principle, I work illegally also. Because I do not want to request a permit for 4500 euro that I need to re-apply for each year and every year, my address is in the newspaper again. It only takes one of those retired folks to read the newspaper and the entire neighbourhood knows it"* (NL-SW5). Another, male sex worker refusing registration for privacy reasons stated clearly: *"I do not want to be known as amateur whore with the government"* (NL-SW17).

Regarding Dutch counter-trafficking policies in particular, it has to be mentioned that since the municipal regulations changed quite often and new counter-trafficking mechanisms were being implemented, some persons selling sex found it hard to follow and appreciate such changes, and did not necessarily perceive them as protective. For instance, to be able to work in the sex industry in Amsterdam, persons selling sex had to undergo 'intake' interview performed by window and brothel owners. The goal was to 'screen' potential victims for signals of exploitation, but neither brothel owners, nor persons selling sex supported the approach. Regarding intake interviews carried out by window owners, for example, one sex worker found them ineffective and intrusive: *"So I went there but you have to do an intake appointment. And so the very first questions that they asked me were: are you forced? And are you doing this independently? And I was like, yeah. No duh, so even if I was forced why would I tell you right now?"* (NL-SW4). Eventually, some brothel owners filed a lawsuit concerning privacy of persons selling sex and their personal data. Municipality officials have recently abandoned these practices as they were announced as breaching the law of privacy and deemed ineffective in identifying potential victims of trafficking. A similar situation was observed in several of the Dutch cities where obligatory registration with health services was implemented. However, some of the Dutch respondents believed that such intake interviews might still protect or identify persons selling sex who are forced in the industry. However, this will only be the case if interviews are conducted by psychologists and not the window owners. Finally, what was agreed by everyone is that there should be a way to inform persons selling sex about their rights and possibilities, and it is important that potential persons selling sex have an entrusted

<sup>29</sup> DESIRE, Report on the legal and regulatory approaches towards sex work in four EU-countries (October 2017), p.22, available at: <http://project-desire.eu/report-on-the-legal-and-regulatory-approaches-towards-sex-work-in-four-eu-countries-2>.

person (social workers, care provider) who she/he can trust with their questions. Since intake interviews with brothel owners are considered not to be effective by some of the Dutch experts, they suggested to always perform intake interviews with a psychologist rather than brothel owners.

Dutch policy makers and service providers expressed their dissatisfaction with what they see as a turn towards more restrictive or ‘overprotective’ measures in many Dutch municipalities, as a result of the Sneep trafficking case. This opinion was very well summarised by the following respondent : *“I think we made a good move when we lifted the ban on brothels, but then all the macro factors surrounding it turned a little bit against us and turned into this cramp or this very cramped position of moral panic surrounding this two or three big cases in the Netherlands of human trafficking (...) We kind of act in panic, I would say, and that makes now our sex work policy to turn into an ever more, eh, repressive direction and I don’t believe that is good for the workers themselves and it’s not only my opinion, but most of the sex workers I have spoken with are not supporting the policy and if they’re not supporting it, how can it be good for them?”* (NL-P4). It was also mentioned by other academics and researchers that such ‘moral panic’ basically turned the policy ‘backwards’ in terms of empowerment of persons selling sex (see also earlier, resistance against the trafficking discourse).

### **5.3. Future legal and policy measures proposed regarding the sex industry**

In the three countries represented in this report, legal change was explicitly advocated, by most respondents, in the sense of regulation or decriminalisation, and for the Netherlands in particular, a greater simplification and unification of the (municipal) regulations and policies.

#### **5.3.1. Legalisation versus criminalisation**

Regarding the question whether criminalising the buying or selling of sex would decrease the provision of sexual services, the answers of the general public showed a similar pattern for buying as for selling: most Croatian and Polish survey respondents believed that such legal measures would not change the provision of sexual services (60-63% in Croatia, 41-42% in Poland), or doubted that this would be the case (21% of Croatian respondents and up to 38% of Polish respondents answer “don’t know”). In the Netherlands, a larger group of survey respondents (43-44%) believed that the criminalization of the buying or the selling of sex would impact on the provision of sexual services by decreasing it, but this response did not indicate whether or not they found these measures desirable (since they were not asked this question), and 21% responded “don’t know”.

Despite the discussion of decriminalisation differs in Croatia (decriminalisation of the provision of services) and Poland (decriminalisation of the facilitation of the prostitution of others) the online surveys indicated that there is no public consensus on this topic: this is one of value issues that divides the public sphere, usually between left-wing and right-wing politics and social movements. Croatian law enforcers who were interviewed were generally in favour of harsh sanctions towards persons selling sex and persons buying sex, stronger police surveillance and eradicating sex work from society. Some of them had personal experience in

their work with victims and offenders; many shared the opinion that persons selling sex are in an oppressed, vulnerable and powerless position. The interviewed persons selling sex, persons buying sex, policy officials and civil society stakeholders on the other hand, not only in Croatia but also in Poland, mostly favoured legalisation/decriminalisation because in their opinion, this would increase the protection of persons selling sex against exploiting pimps, forced prostitution and trafficking. Although supporting legalisation, some of the Polish persons selling sex were not happy to be officially registered as prostitutes and to pay taxes. Croatian persons selling sex also indicated that for them it would make a difference if the police would stop harassing and prosecuting them. Among the general public in Croatia, a majority (56%) appeared to agree that legalising the selling of sex would make persons selling sex less vulnerable. Polish (42% agreed) and Dutch respondents (49% agreed) were less optimistic about the impact of legalisation and much more often answer that they did not know (34% in Poland and in the Netherlands versus 18% in Croatia).

Interviewees in the three countries supported legalised prostitution more explicitly: they expressed the opinion that legalisation was necessary to regulate the provision of sexual services comprehensively and must be coupled with the creation of a support system for persons providing sexual services, and with ruthless pursuit of the actual exploiters. Or, as a Dutch buyer put it: *“Legalisation is also required to be able to provide an overview of the industry, and to direct policy towards creating safer working conditions”* (NL-B13). In Poland, the opinion prevailed among interviewees that decriminalising or legalising the provision of sexual services would give the police more tools to combat trafficking and sexual exploitation. Checks would be more effective (currently, keeping registers with data of women providing sexual services is illegal). Legal solutions would also introduce the possibility of legally organised associations that protect or establish an employer-employee relationship. It would also be helpful to promote NGOs that help victims of trafficking, sexual exploitation and sexual workers.

While some Dutch persons buying sex who were interviewed stated that de-legalising the Dutch sex industry would slightly reduce the supply and demand for sexual services (similar to members of the general public who think that the provision of sexual services will decrease, as discussed earlier), none mentioned that it would increase the level of safety within the sex industry. As one buyer noted when asked about the possible consequences of making the supply and demand of sexual services illegal: *“Because people are already used to it working in this manner. If you go and illegalise it now, then there is a whole market for it still, then that market makes its way into the illegal circuit, you know?”* (NL-B8). Most of the Polish interviewees also stated that criminalisation of sex work and punishing persons buying sex is a bad, illogical and risky scenario, because the sex business will be pushed out to the ‘grey zone’ or even to underground. This means lack of effective state control and growing role of organised crime in managing of prostitution.

Further, respondents often mentioned that even when the selling and buying of sex were criminalised, persons selling sex and persons buying sex will still find ways to meet. Persons selling sex can easily find ways to promote their services among potential persons buying sex,

and potential persons buying sex can work out methods to reach persons selling sex with minimal risk of being apprehended.

### **5.3.2. Criminalising persons buying sex**

In the three countries, there appeared to be limited support only for the criminalisation of persons buying sex, both among the groups of interviewees and among the general public. Survey respondents were not asked whether they find this a desirable measure, but rather what they think would be its impact on the sex industry: only 21% of the Polish and Croatian members of the public answered that the provision of sexual services decreases when buying sex is criminalized, opposed to 43% of Dutch survey respondents. In all the countries, a substantial group doubted that this measure will change the provision of sexual services: around 20% of the Dutch and Croatian survey respondents and no less than 38% of the general public in Poland answered that they do not know. In Croatia, 60% of the survey respondents thought that criminalising the buying of sex would not decrease the provision of sexual services.

The fact that compared to the other two countries, more members of the public in the Netherlands believed that criminalizing persons buying sex had an impact on the provision of sexual services (43%), was confirmed by a Dutch expert who stated: *“the Swedish model is of course factually just a ban on prostitution (...) that is what I find the downside of the Swedish model, that they generalise all prostitution (...) because if you are talking about prostitution there, than that is actually just a synonym for human trafficking (NL-E7)”*. However, it was not because they are believed to have a potential impact, that such legal measures are therefore approved of. On the contrary, most Dutch interviewees indicated that they did not support criminalisation of the sex industry (buying, selling or facilitating sex) in any way.

In Poland, those interviewed who spoke about the so-called ‘Swedish model’, indicated that they were not against the idea of punishing persons buying sex as such, but they believe that such a solution is simply illogical. This does not mean that this system had no supporters, but only very few people have expressed the view that this is the right direction (PL-E7, PL-B2). This was of course referring to the provision of sexual services by persons selling sex. But in a Nordic model such demarcation does not exist, every sex worker is also a victim. Polish women providing sexual services with whom interviews were conducted did not agree with bringing them to the role of a victim. The following provides an overview of the Polish interviewees’ reactions to the criminalisation of persons buying sex:

- (PL-E26): *“Is this not a more dangerous model? Because what can it do? The client is faced with a choice to use a prostitute and to be punished, whether to commit a sexual offense and also to be punished. You can be a prostitute but you will not have any clients. (...) This is not a good solution, because it pushes prostitution down and strengthens criminal groups. The client will have to pay for the criminal group in order to not to disclose his identity. (...) And in general, the penalty of a prostitute and client is a completely aborted idea, because we lose control over everything.”*
- (PL-SW13): *“I think that the only thing that stigmatizes even more. Again I am the poor victim who needs to be saved. The client is stigmatized again, and I respect the right*



*of adults to consensual sexual relations or to buy them. I'm just losing those good customers who will be scared of sanctions."*

- (PL-E13): *"It is bringing all sexual workers to the level of the unconscious and unable to make up for themselves, this is a humiliating approach of critical feminism."*
- (PL-E18): *"It is just odd."*
- (PL-E25): *"It is strange to me, I just don't understand this solution".*
- (PL-E09): *"There is demand and there will always be supply and somehow this business will function. Punishing customers does not make sense."*
- (PL-E05): *"Regulations do not matter. There are so many girls willing (to sell sex) that no one has to push themselves into forcing anyone. It should be legalized."*
- (PL-E12): *"If a man knows that he is punished for sex with a prostitute, the wife, neighbour and employer will find out about it, and instead of going to a prostitute, he will rape a girl in the bushes."*
- (PL-E06): *"Penalizing prostitution would be a bad mistake, it would lead to a paradox that prevails in the US. The 'outflow' of women punished for prostitution would make illegal trade, because these women would have to be 'supplied'. Trade would flourish, they would have to fill the gaps"*

The statements of interviewed persons buying sex and forum members expressing their point of view on the Polish online forum for persons buying sex indicated that the general reluctance of persons buying sex to speak about human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and its prevention was motivated by the fear that sexual services will be banned: *"I went to the European site (<http://project-desire.eu/>) and what do we have there? Barbed wire, like in a churchyard, images of women who were abused by bad men, something like this in the middle of the page: 'Criminalising the purchase of sexual services has been considered by some States as a way to reduce demand for sexual services that fuels trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation' (...) in other words, this is another femi-nazis jihad that wants to punish customers (...) Because the proposals to introduce "abolition", as known as the "Nordic model", as known as "criminalisation of beneficiaries" at EU level have already fallen, and this is preparing the ground for further attempts to make criminals from our brothers-in-law (buyers) community" (see Annex 7.3.).* Among the surveyed persons selling sex and victims in Poland, all respondents stated that the client should not be punished. According to the claim, there should be punishment for pimps who use someone else's work.

### **5.3.3. Selling sex as a regular job or not?**

In Croatia, when persons selling sex discussed legalisation, their arguments were mostly oriented towards gaining employment status. In Croatian society, employment status was considered to be more important than earning money: it was connected with health and pension insurance and the status of full citizenship in general. In Poland, on the contrary, the large support among respondents for a further liberalisation of regulations towards a full legalisation of sex work did not mean that creating the sex worker profession, and its consequences, were accepted easily. The key issue in this matter was the opinion of women offering sexual services, who feared that in such an intolerant society as the Polish one, any form of professional identification would lead to stigmatisation and numerous negative effects.



#### **5.3.4. Unification or simplification of the legislation (the Netherlands)**

Dutch persons selling sex expected the Dutch legal framework to be clearer, more transparent and more simplified: *“I think it would be handy if one law was implemented nationally, so that there are no significant differences between municipalities, that that would result in more clarity”* (NL-SW7), and *“it should simply be a clear rule: you are allowed to work. You can simply request a license (...) You are allowed to work from your own home. Once in a certain amount of time, someone comes and checks up on things and you pay your taxes. Done”* (NL-SW6).

Although maybe at first, such a recommendation may appear unimportant, considering the presence of vulnerable groups such as migrants who have language difficulties, greater simplicity in rights and regulations may be a desired goal. Some Dutch researchers and policy-makers agreed that both unified legislation and decentralisation have their pros and cons, therefore it might be good to see the balance, as one of them explained: *“Sex work is a very complex, very complex topic and it is very difficult to make good policies around it. Yes, you cannot expect municipality employees to make policies about it. But the argument for decentralisation is that policies better match local situation (...) If I was a Prime Minister I would make a committee and I would ask them to think about which parts of sex work legislation and policy could be centralised and which parts are actually in which areas it should be better to have local input”* (NL-P2).

### **5.4. Proposals to prevent sexual exploitation and human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation**

When asked about possible means for curbing sexual exploitation and human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, the research participants provided a number of concrete examples of the types of initiatives that should be prioritised with a view to preventing and minimising the risk of exploitation.

#### **5.4.1. Legal protection and accessibility of the authorities**

As was already mentioned above when discussing the legal and policy measures regarding the sex industry that research respondents proposed, in Croatia, the Netherlands and Poland, the opinion prevailed that sexual exploitation could be tackled more efficiently when sex work was not illegal - either subject to decriminalisation or regulation - and when the law was stricter towards the offenders who are exploiting. There were many pleas for more focus on the identification of criminal groups and networks. It was also mentioned by some experts that there should be conditions created that make it not profitable to exploit persons selling sex, and that focus on tackling specific exploitative persons buying sex (e.g. bestiality) at the same time.

As part of protection by the authorities, interviewees in all countries mentioned the need for easy access for victims of sexual exploitation to the authorities, to report exploitation. In Poland, for example, persons selling sex had rather limited possibilities to receive professional

legal assistance or even to contact state institutions and NGOs, because they could be ashamed of what they are doing, how they are working. Moreover, they could simply be afraid to contact any outsider especially when they are controlled by pimps or when they think (or were told) that sex work is penalised. Polish respondents also stressed that law enforcement agencies should be encouraged institutionally to become more accessible and attentive to the sex business and forced prostitution. Modern technology can be helpful here, by offering specific applications for contacting the police. Increasing the accessibility of the authorities appears to be a priority, because as we already mentioned earlier (section 3.3.3.2.), many Croatian and Dutch citizens, women in particular, thought that persons who are forced to sell sex cannot call the authorities for help, or expressed their doubts about the authorities helping when called upon.

In the Netherlands, respondents generally recommended improving labour conditions via administrative regulations, because the sex industry was perceived by the Dutch government as a legal occupation (this is the perception, but it heavily depends on the municipality whether sex work or specific sectors are allowed to operate). More precisely, some Dutch respondents criticised the fact that persons selling sex were unable to open a bank account by themselves in some municipalities. They offered advice to make sure that persons selling sex have defined labour standards and that there was a way to tackle exploitation in the similar way as in other labour sectors. This might require unified legislation including in the municipalities that do not have sex work policies. Another way to increase labour standards proposed by Dutch experts was to create an NGO that would organise the legal provision of sex services, without receiving profits from this. In this way, financial gain by third parties would be impossible (also for the Government), as one Dutch expert explains: *"I think if we take profit out of the equation the reasons for exploitation evaporate. (...) if you take the financial gain out of the equation, then you change the center, priority automatically almost becomes good labour conditions for sex workers which I try to achieve"* (NL-P2). Slightly different, but comparable, is the initiative in the municipality of Amsterdam, called 'My Red Light'. It is a window brothel owned by the municipality but run by persons selling sex themselves. Although the initiative is innovative, respondents from the municipality did admit that it is very difficult to run the place, since the persons selling sex encounter similar problems as any other brothel owner.

Respondents in countries where law and policy provide for support and assistance, identified the critique that this was sometimes conditional on ongoing criminal proceedings and acquiring the official status of trafficking victim. When a case is dropped, then any support and assistance being offered can also be withdrawn.

#### **5.4.2. Alternatives to legislation**

Next to the above mentioned increased legal protection of persons selling sex – either by decriminalising or regulating sex work or by legally regulating labour conditions – most interviewees in Poland, Croatia and the Netherlands suggested alternatives to legal solutions that focus on prevention. When discussing other measures for (social) assistance, a distinction must be made between support for those in sex work, and support for those who wish to exit sex work. Overall, there appears to be a huge demand for health, social care and employment opportunities, in the first place from persons selling sex themselves and support to human

trafficking victims. Croatian interviewees, for example, stated that because *“the police is always a few steps behind the criminals”* (HR-P29), they prefer investments in *“accommodation, job, prequalification”* (HR-P2), and *“shelters, counselling”* (HR-P8).

Croatian stakeholders who were interviewed (N= 30) thought that public institutions can help a person to exit sex work and most of them (N= 28 out of 30) would give a contribution as a citizen if a sex worker asks them. The most important strategy for support from public institutions would be to provide new employment opportunities (N= 18), followed by providing housing (N= 8), financial assistance (N= 6) and health care (N= 2). Interviewees also find important inclusion into support provided by civil society organisations (N= 7). When asked as citizens or professionals to help a sex worker, they could provide access to civil society organisations or psychosocial support (N= 10), financial assistance (N= 9), police protection (N= 5), contacts with a social welfare centre or employment office and accommodation in a shelter.

In Croatia and Poland, interviewees mentioned a lack of organisations specialised in the provision of support and assistance and in understanding sex work, sexual exploitation and trafficking – which they related to the general lack of public debate on the topic. The future development of such organisations should be encouraged according to the respondents in both countries. At the moment, in Croatia, support for persons selling sex and victims of violence was mostly provided by NGOs, in shelters for violence victims, and by providers of free legal assistance and medical care. Several interviewees stressed that there are few support providers and insufficient on a national level. In Poland, one expert stated that *“Certainly organizations / foundations should support women. There should be a helpline where women could call. This should be done. You have to help these women, you should support them all the time. You cannot tell her to go to the police. You have to help them get some other qualifications, a job, create alternatives so that they do not have to prostitute themselves just to feed themselves”* (PL-E12). What is interesting about this Polish comment, is that it is gender specific and not something that is identified as important for men as well. In the Netherlands, on the contrary, several interviewees state that there is a need for organisations and interventions that address the specific problems and demands of male persons selling sex: one male sex worker mentioned that he felt particularly under-represented and under-acknowledged. He noticed, for example, that when he travelled for his periodic medical check-up, the health and information brochures targeted women only (NL-SW12).

#### **5.4.2.1. Information about rights and education/training for persons selling sex**

Many interviewees mentioned that first, persons selling sex have to be informed about their rights and possibilities and that this was a primordial strategy for the prevention and identification of trafficking victims. As one Dutch service provider summarised: *“I would always want to ensure that there is an information on stream towards the sex workers, that that is implemented as efficiently as possible. And that is really about victims of human trafficking that they receive the information necessary and know where they can go”* (NL-P4). Specific attention for informing persons selling sex in vulnerable sectors, e.g. male sex work and home sex work, is required, as one of the Dutch service providers stated: *“for the sex workers who*

*want to work from home, well I would simply like to engage in a lot of dialogue with them. What is needed to work safely and what is the reason that they do not work within the permitted branch"* (NL-P8). According to most persons selling sex in the various countries, education is a leader among the methods to spot sexual exploitation. Persons selling sex say that those who are well-aware and well-trained will better defend themselves against enslavement and exploitation.

Dutch persons selling sex suggested that training would also be useful even in the process of considering entering the sex industry. In this way, those that enter the industry by choice can do so in a fully informed manner, know their rights, understand the judicial framework within which they operate, and be in general prepared for the difficulties that the industry might bring. This training could possibly also aid in the detection of signals of exploitation, among persons selling sex and in the industry in general: *"I think actually there should be a-some kind of education before you can do the work. It might be strange. But if you go to the military you also are very young and you experience quite heavy situations (...) they get trained for it. And I think maybe something like that, maybe not from the government, but something like that, maybe sex workers themselves can start it, to be there for the girls who want to do that"* (NL-SW9). Considering the existing obstacles that victims face for reporting signals of exploitation and human trafficking to the authorities, such training could provide persons selling sex who are reluctant to report with the tools to minimise harm individually. Also, such training could be aimed at informing both male and female persons selling sex and thus make information equally accessible to all those who are active in the sex industry. In Poland, for example, persons selling sex cross-link thanks to the Sex Work Polska organization; they have access to legal and psychological help. The last initiative of the collective is a self-defence course for persons selling sex learning how to liberate themselves from various sexual positions in bed (PL-E13, PL-SW13). The idea is also to create counselling for persons selling sex in different cities in Poland.

Dutch experts also proposed to do more outreach work, make a 'physical' reminder of the rights and possibilities of persons selling sex by distributing flyers. Respondents also advocated for awareness campaigns. Finally, Polish respondents believed that in order to combat exploitation and trafficking, the burden of humiliating stereotypes about persons selling sex should be removed through more intensive sexual education. Such education also allowed to set the limits of self-sexuality and to identify adverse situations.

#### **5.4.2.2. Health care**

Increased health care for persons selling sex was mentioned regularly, and by all the categories of respondents. In Poland, for example, persons selling sex and experts' pled for psychological consultations by the National Health Fund and free access for all persons selling sex to medical examinations and tests. Persons selling sex themselves focused a lot on health protection, one Polish sex worker even used the phrase *"zero tolerance for sex without a condom"* (PL-SW05).

#### **5.4.2.3. Help with exiting prostitution**

All interviewees, in particular persons selling sex themselves, mention that exiting prostitution and situations of exploitation and/or trafficking was extremely difficult. Among the general public, in the Netherlands 60% of the survey respondents thought it was difficult for a person selling sex to stop when they want. In Poland and Croatia, 47% and 51% were convinced of the difficulties to exit prostitution. Remarkably, 24% (Croatia) and 40% (Poland) of the survey respondents answered that they “don’t know”: this might indicate that people in the general public can’t imagine what the reality of being in sex work is like and therefore not know how difficult it would be to stop.

Several interviewees also suggested that it can sometimes be necessary to raise the person’s awareness in case he or she does not perceive him- or herself as victim of sexual exploitation.

As the most important form of help with exiting, interviewees mentioned offering alternative employment opportunities: in their opinion, the role of the government, the police, civil society or others is to make people aware that sex work is not the only way to earn money, raise their professional qualifications in society, and assist them in finding another job outside the sex industry. Polish experts expected the state to play a crucial role in this, by creating special supporting programs that will help them change their current activity and start working in another sector.

If persons selling sex are not a part of existing exit programs, however, the only option left for them is to leave the industry and find a new occupation by themselves. Yet it is more and more difficult to do something different since persons selling sex cannot place in their CV what exactly they were doing in the past. For instance, a Dutch sex worker explicitly mentioned that she would like to ‘move forward’ in her career but cannot really use her skills because she feels uncomfortable mentioning them in her CV (NL-SW5). Similar ideas were voiced during informal conversations of the Dutch researchers with persons selling sex who considered the option of leaving.

Dominican persons selling sex in the Netherlands also stated that one of the problems with leaving the industry, even if they wanted to, was language and a lack of options for other employment. One of them mentioned that she asked persons buying sex to help her with other employment, but persons buying sex could not help due to the lack of language skills: *“I ask them: can you help me to find a job to help. But they say: you do not speak the language. We can see that you are, you like to work but because, but you do not speak the language”* (NL-SW3).

#### **5.4.2.4. Sensitising persons buying sex and developing anonymous reporting systems**

Respondents in the various countries generally did not see an important role of persons buying sex in the process of trafficking in human beings, because they believed that a large proportion of persons buying sex were simply not aware that they use the services of a victim. A solution proposed was to educate persons buying sex and sensitise them to the emotional needs of

others and the universal human right to be treated with respect. One of the victims in Poland talked about how one of the persons buying sex helped her in a foreign country. First, he helped collect evidence against her pimp and when she was released, he let her live in his home during the trial. There was also a minority of persons buying sex, as was mentioned already, who did not care much about the woman behind the person providing sexual services.

In the Netherlands, not all persons buying sex perceived themselves as responsible for the safety of persons selling sex in the industry: *"People have their own lives and hide for other people's problems (shit). That's the way it is nowadays (...) I can't do anything (...) I don't engage in that discussion because they [potential victims of exploitation] will just deny it anyway"* (NL-B2). On the other hand, several Dutch persons buying sex proposed clear mechanisms of how to increase identification of victims of trafficking or exploitation. For instance, the distribution of posters in red-light districts and private houses to persons buying sex that display a list of indications of abuse and exploitation, in combination with encouragements to call an anonymous hotline. Dutch persons buying sex pointed out that such an anonymous reporting system might indeed help in monitoring safety and abuse, on the condition that it is not turned into a legal obligation, however: *"I think this could help because I think that currently in case of bad circumstances, buyers do not really know where to report (...) I think a legal obligation is not very effective and I think that it is better to hope on people's morals and play into that"* (NL-B7).

Of course, it is important to distinguish between the recognition of indications of human trafficking and sexual exploitation on the one hand, and the reporting of such abuse to the authorities on the other. While distribution of information on the indications of abuse or trafficking might increase the awareness of persons buying sex, it does not guarantee that they will actually take action and call a hotline. Some persons buying sex were especially sceptical about the idea, suggesting that reporting to such an anonymous hotline would not be done often: *"I think that people are predominantly concerned with themselves, and not with sex workers"*, a Dutch buyer remarked (NL-B9). Other reasons that might demotivate persons buying sex to report abuse are the fear of being publicly exposed and shame, even when an anonymous system is used.



## 6. Conclusions

- *What are the attitudes towards sex work in Croatia, The Netherlands, and Poland? (see section 3.1)*

Attitudes are varied and complex, as experienced by the research teams when seeking to implement the fieldwork (section 2.6.6) where concerns were raised about the purpose of such research and its overall aim, e.g. concerns that the Swedish model will be implemented on the one hand, and concerns that legalisation is advocated on the other. Differences emerged between and within groups of respondents, between personal and professional opinion, between countries, etc. (section 3.1).

Overall, persons selling sex, persons buying sex, policy officials and civil society stakeholders who were interviewed more often displayed positive attitudes, while victims and law enforcement officials interviewed more often displayed negative attitudes. However, in Poland, law enforcement representatives expressed positive attitudes towards the legalisation of facilitation of the prostitution of others. The general public display mixed and ambivalent attitudes, that sometimes differ between countries and are sometimes relatively similar. Both survey respondents and interviewees in Croatia indicated that the public opinion towards selling and buying of sex was relatively negative, in Poland survey respondents also presented a negative opinion towards selling and buying of sex, however, the interviewees viewed these issues positively; in the Netherlands there was more acceptance, but sex work is therefore not viewed positively or as 'normal'. Moreover, where the sex industry is 'normalised', it did not mean that it was unproblematic (section 3.1.2), as there was still the possibility of experiencing violence and exploitation.

Although some respondents displayed greater personal tolerance (in the Netherlands, for example), this was often combined with a 'not in my backyard' attitude: while a majority of survey respondents believed that people have the right to sell and buy sex and would be willing to hire or work with a former sex worker, most of them would not want a family member to be involved in the sex industry. This approach was also indicated by the number of general public who responded with "don't know" / "prefer not to answer" (section 2.5.7). This ambivalence was criticised by persons selling sex, persons buying sex and experts in all the countries as a form of 'public hypocrisy': persons selling sex are viewed negatively and stigmatized (confirmed not only by persons selling sex themselves (section 3.1.2) and persons buying sex (section 3.1.4), but also by most survey respondents in the three countries), yet sexual services are widely offered and used, also where this is illegal. Apart from some sort of hypocrisy, however, the public attitudes towards not wanting family members to work in the sex industry could also be linked to awareness of all the problems associated with this work, and not wanting someone that they are close to experiencing those issues.

Finally, and importantly, although negative attitudes or at least ambivalence prevailed among the public (less in the Netherlands, more in Croatia and Poland), most members of the public did not, for that reason, question the idea that adults should be allowed to choose if they want to sell or buy sexual services. The human right to individual freedom and choice was clearly highly valued in the three countries, which explains the relatively high support for the legal

protection of the rights of persons selling sex and the very low support for legal measures that criminalise the buying and selling of sex (see further).

- *What are the new forms and trends in the sex-industry in Croatia, The Netherlands, and Poland? (new services, channels, etc) (see section 3.2)*

The most important trends were the move of the sex industry online and underground. The latter did not necessarily result from the former, but sometimes also from policies such as the closing of licensed brothels (in several municipalities in the Netherlands). The net result of the shift underground was increased vulnerability of the sector. In particular, the respondents stated that the impact of such a shift and increased invisibility means that persons selling sex were at increased risk for exploitation. In particular, the shift underground led to a policy gap, where public authorities did not seek to regulate the provision of sexual services that does not occur on the streets (section 3.2.1), leading to less safety and protection of persons selling sex (section 3.3.1). Finally, persons selling sex referred to the financial incentive of a shift underground where policies regulating street/window prostitution make it a less profitable venture (section 3.2.1).

- *Does the law and policy model in Croatia, The Netherlands, and Poland effectively ensure the protection of sex-workers and make them feel safe? What specific measures and actions make them/would make them feel safe when selling sex (e.g. access to health care, protection from violence – including sexual violence, safe reporting, exit programmes)? (see section 3.3 and section 5.4)*

Safety and protection of persons selling sex were identified as key priorities by all groups of interviewees in all countries. Among the general public, however, opinions differed regarding the questions whether the authorities should provide safety for people that want to sell and buy sex, and who or what should be their main concern. Whereas in the Netherlands and Croatia, a majority of respondents' answered that the authorities should provide safety for persons selling sex and persons buying sex, Polish women in particular were divided about this question and both male and female Polish respondents considered the protection of the public order and of public morals as more important priorities.

In countries where the provision of sexual services is illegal (Croatia) or the facilitation of the prostitution of others is criminalised (Poland), interviewees tended to view the existing law and policy framework as a source of unsafety/danger for persons selling sex and to identify legalisation or decriminalisation as major actions that would make persons selling sex feel safer. In the Netherlands, interviewees indicated that legal means to increase protection of persons selling sex should be focused on the definition of clear labour standards on the one hand, and on reducing the fragmentation of laws and policies regulating the sex industry (high rents of windows and absence of safety buttons in certain municipalities generate unsafe situations and risks for sexual exploitation, for example).

Apart from these legal means, other actions suggested to increase safety and protect against sexual exploitation were the provision of safe spaces for buying and selling sex and increased initiatives to provide information to persons selling sex about their legal rights.

Respondents in all three countries also assigned an important role to the authorities in providing assistance and protection to persons selling sex in need or who want to exit. At the same time, however, in Croatia and the Netherlands and among women in particular, there was not much trust that the authorities will provide help when called upon by persons who are forced to sell sex. As a result, all respondents placed a significant emphasis on service provision (often, but not exclusively, provided by civil society) that focused upon socio-economic, psychological and physical well-being of the persons selling sex (section 3.3.3.3).

- *How do the target groups understand sexual exploitation in Croatia, The Netherlands, and Poland? (see section 4.1)*

Interviewees in the three countries associated sexual exploitation with coercion, physical abuse and financial and labour exploitation. Many only saw a limited connection between sex work on the one hand, and sexual exploitation on the other. Among the general public, on the contrary, many respondents, in the three countries, thought that sex work often or sometimes involves sexual exploitation. Selling and buying sex was, however, not often linked by the interviewees with human trafficking: respondents either indicated that they did not know much about human trafficking because they were never exposed to it and because of a lack of public debate (in Croatia and Poland), or they indicated that there was only a limited connection with sex work, that human trafficking was an entirely distinct reality involving organised crime circuits and was only a marginal in scope. More precisely, human trafficking was either perceived as an exceptional phenomenon (Croatia) or something that was conflated with sexual exploitation and/or the sex industry generating a moral panic (The Netherlands/ Poland).

- *Which exploitative strategies are used by persons buying sex and facilitators? (see section 4.2)*

Persons buying sex were generally not viewed as sources of exploitation. Pimps and facilitators were seen sometimes as a form of protection, but more often as sources of danger and exploitation. Strategies were romantic involvement and the so-called 'bait strategy' that involves promises of a better life, money, other opportunities, etc. Interviewees believed that exploiters target the most vulnerable groups first: children, single women and undocumented migrants are depicted as the persons most likely to become victims.

- *How to reduce the demand for sexual services since that demand may fuel human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation (see section 5.4)*

When proposing means to prevent human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, respondents did not identify the reduction of demand for sexual services as a priority strategy. On the contrary, the legal strategy to reduce demand for sexual services currently applied in Sweden, e.g. the criminalisation of persons buying sex, does not appear to be viewed as an effective and desirable solution by the interviewees and the general public in in Poland, Croatia and the Netherlands.

- *What are the effects of legislation and policy towards the perception of human trafficking for sexual exploitation? (see section 5.2)*

It must be noted that a limited connection between sex work and human trafficking has as well as a limited ability to identify the impact of policy has emerged from the data, meaning that it was difficult to make conclusions regarding the effects of legislation and policy towards the perception of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. However, some respondents did refer to a conflation of regulation of the sex industry and the anti-trafficking approach (section 5.2.2) leading to a conflation of persons selling sex and victims of human trafficking (section 5.3.2).

- *How can sexual exploitation be reduced by legislation and policy in the context of different regulatory regimes? (see section 5.4)*

Most interviewees identified the following as major means to prevent sexual exploitation and thereby human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation: 1) increased legal protection of (the labour conditions of) persons selling sex; 2) increased accessibility of (protection by) the authorities; 3) strong and targeted judicial action against exploiters and traffickers and the sectors of organised crime in which they operate and 4) various alternatives to legislation and policy.

In Croatia and Poland, legalisation/decriminalisation of the sex industry was viewed by interviewees as a means to increase protection of persons selling sex against sexual exploitation. Some persons selling sex were against legalisation/decriminalisation because in that case taxes would be charged to them. In the specific regulatory regime of the Netherlands, better protection can be obtained by working towards a more comprehensive and less fragmented legal framework, according to the interviewees. In the three countries, about half of the members from the general public also believed that legalising sex makes persons selling sex less vulnerable, but many others, in particular Dutch and Polish survey respondents expressed their doubts about the impact of such a measure.

The criminalization of the buying or the selling of sex did not get much support from the interviewees in the three countries, while the general public indicated that such legal measures would not change the provision of sexual services, or doubted that this would be the case. In the Netherlands, a larger group of survey respondents believed that the criminalization of the buying or the selling of sex would impact on the provision of sexual services by decreasing it, but the respondents were not asked whether they find this a desirable measure.

Regarding the use and impact of human trafficking legislation, the evidence collected through the interviews (not asked in the survey) was insufficient to produce clear conclusions. The only explicit mentions regarding human trafficking law that emerged from the interviews involved the criticism by certain persons selling sex, persons buying sex and experts that human trafficking laws and discourses reduced the agency of persons selling sex and were used as a cover for more repressive, intrusive measures towards the sex industry. Interviewees appeared to be more in favour of alternatives to legislation, in all three countries (section 5.4.2).

## **7. Annexes**

### **7.1. Practical information about the interviews and the survey**

#### **7.1.1. The semi-structured interviews**

##### **CROATIA**

Interviews were conducted during end of March, April and May of 2018, all in Croatian with the presence of interviewer and respondent, in open public space, private spaces and offices of respondents. Interviews were not recorded, and in every group respondents showed more or less unwillingness to be recorded due to the sensitive and controversial topic. Interviews with persons selling sex were conducted with the duration of 25 to 60 minutes, and the average duration was 43 minutes. Interviews with buyer were the shortest, respondents were not very open, and interviews lasted 10 to 30 minutes (average duration was 21 minutes). Interviews with stakeholders' representatives lasted between 20 minutes and one hour with an average duration of 36 minutes.

##### **THE NETHERLANDS**

The first interview was conducted in February 2018, but since the national ethical clearance was only received in April 2018, data collection was put hold during this period. The most active months of the fieldwork were April and May 2018. Ethnographic site visits were carried out from the start of the project with and intensified in the period from January to July 2018.

Fieldwork site visits were undertaken in the following cities: The Hague (visit 2 times), Amsterdam (outreach context work 6 months), Groningen, Leeuwarden, Eindhoven, Tilburg, Breda and Alkmaar. More precisely, observations were conducted in The Hague, Eindhoven, Alkmaar, Amsterdam and Leeuwarden. In Breda and Tilburg there are no red-light districts, but interviews were carried out with persons selling sex, service providers and law enforcement authorities.

Most of the interviews were carried out by Dutch team members or interns (who were specifically instructed); all site visits were performed by one senior researcher and one intern. After every visit the site visit was discussed, and observations were noted. Only one interview with a Spanish speaking ex-sex worker was conducted with a help of translator that was a part of referral organisation and had known this ex-sex worker for quite a long time. Also, the interview with NL-V01 was conducted in the presence of the same service provider who translated the interview from Spanish.

##### **POLAND**

Interviews were conducted from January 2018 to the end of May 2018. The duration of interviews ranged from 10 minutes to 3 hours. The average length of interviews is 30 minutes. Most of the interviews were conducted in Warsaw. Other places where interviews were conducted were: Gniezno, Poznań, Skarżysko-Kamienna, Łódź and Lublin. Telephone contact was made with a person from Silesia, from Wrocław and from Pomerania. Skype: Krakow and Denmark. All interviews took place without the presence of third parties.

## 7.1.2. The online survey

### 7.1.2.1. General public: sample and data collection

The purpose of the inclusion of a quantitative study is to contribute to the ability to generalise to the entire population of each country, thereby making it easier to also compare across the countries and to substantiate the findings.

The General Public (G) target group was required to be a representation of society as possible with a representation of gender, age (adults only, 18 and above), socio-economic status and ethnicity. The members do not have to be nationals of the country, but should be currently residing e.g. no tourists. The table below outlines the calculation of the sample size for the target group and the actual sample size.

Data were collected using online polling services in all countries of study. The survey has been translated in the national languages: Croatian, Dutch and Polish.

### 7.1.2.2. Data processing of online survey results

The project coordinator, VUB is responsible for the analysis of the data collected by means of the online surveys. A codebook has been provided to the partners with clear instructions to polling services on the survey, data collection and formats. All datasets were delivered in SPSS format. The datasets of each country were controlled, uniformalised if needed and entered in a global database in order to conduct comparative analysis. Some minor problems had to be solved (mainly on the coding of the 'no answer' category) to generate the global dataset.

## CROATIA

### Sample

The survey involved a total of 385 adults (18 years of age and older). The sample was stratified according to six Croatian region (Zagreb, Northern Croatia, Slavonia, Lika, Kordun and Banija, Istria, Croatian Littoral and Gorski kotar and Dalmatia), gender and four age groups (18-30, 31-40, 41-50 and 51+). In order to achieve representativeness, a quota sample was used and the quotas were set according to the official statistical data<sup>30</sup>.

In the first phase (more precisely, during the bidding process for choosing the research agency), Henda<sup>31</sup> has already pointed out the limitations of the CAWI method of data collection, and the potential problem that the variety of sample and full representativeness cannot be achieved in following groups:

- The oldest age group (65+)

<sup>30</sup> Census 2011

<sup>31</sup>Henda is an *ad hoc* and *full-service* privately owned Croatian market research agency, founded in 1993. Henda's mission is to provide a reliable insight into the market environment through a professional research approach, partnership with clients and socially responsible business. Our business vision is to contribute to the growth and development of companies and society through reliable market research, thus raising the awareness of the importance of all stakeholders in the process of making business and social decisions.

In Henda, the quality is extremely important, proved by the quality standard ISO 9001:2008 and the industrial standard ISO 20252:2012. Adhering to the highest research standards, Henda also proves by being member of ESOMAR, the world's leading market research organization, by participating in the UNDP Global Compact Program to promote socially responsible business and by membership in professional associations such as Global Market Research, American Marketing Association and Association for Market Research at the Croatian Chamber of Economy.

Henda has a total of 21 permanent employees, 7 regional coordinators, 52 telephone interviewers, and hundreds of external collaborators involved in data collection.



- Low educated people (without formal education and with primary education)
- Rural areas (settlements with less than 2000 inhabitants)

Sample limitations are mostly influenced by lower level of internet usage among these demographic groups and consequently lower involvement in online communities and panels.

#### Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed by DESIRE project partners. The master questionnaire was finalized by Udruga LET and delivered in Croatian.

At the beginning of the questionnaire, introductory text explained the purpose of the survey and the confidentiality of the responses. Participation in the survey was voluntary. In addition, respondents were informed they were not obliged to answer all the questions and they can stop participating at any time.

All personal data collected in this survey are confidential and used solely for the purposes of data analysis. No information was provided to the client to identify the participant's identities.

#### Background checks

##### *Data analysis*

Data preparation was performed using the SPSS program. All variables from the data file were named following the Master Codebook provided by the client.

##### *Fieldwork control – statistics and results*

Fieldwork timing: April 2018

Average length of the interview: 9 minutes and 43 seconds

*Table 1. Fieldwork control – statistics*

Fieldwork control statistics			
Number of successful interviews	Number of monitoring completed	Percentage of all interviews monitored	
385	97	25%	
Interviews replaced due to poor quality	Interviewers disqualified due to quality		
0	0		
Total number of interviews	Total number of screen-outs (rejections)	Total number of contacts (interviews + screen-outs)	Response rate (total number of interviews/total number of contacts*100)
385	198	1812	21,2%

During the fieldwork control, no significant irregularities were detected in the results.

## THE NETHERLANDS

### Sample

The quantitative data collection was undertaken by CentERdata. They work with surveying panel members using an online platform. The LISS panel consists of around 5000 households which includes around 7000 individuals. These households complete a survey every month on a wide variety of topics. These monthly online questionnaires/surveys take around 15 to 30 minutes to complete and respondents are paid for each completed questionnaire.

This panel is constructed to reflect a true probability sample of households drawn from the population register by Statistics Netherlands. In order to facilitate participation, households that do not have access to a computer or internet connection are provided with such. The LISS panel is available for research in social, policy and scientific fields.

Firstly, to establish the LISS panel a random sample was drawn from population registers. This sample was drawn in collaboration with Statistics Netherlands and includes people who do not possess an internet connection.

Secondly, as the requested sample size for this research was smaller than the whole panel, a random subsample of 543 panel members within the age category '18 years or older' was selected. Those who were selected as included in the sample were approached in a traditional manner including by letter, telephone and house visit to deliver an invitation to participate. Individuals who are not included in the original sample are unable to participate consequently meaning that there is no self-selection. Those who do not possess the equipment to complete the survey are loaned the necessary equipment.

Approximately 80% of those living in the registered panel households participate. The monthly response rate of these participants varies between 50% and 80%, depending on the questionnaire distributed and month of the year.

For the data collection in the Netherlands, a net sample of 400 respondents aged 18 years and older was required. The sample is representative for the Dutch speaking population. CentERdata offered to conduct online data collection using the representative LISS panel (Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social sciences).

### The questionnaire:

The questionnaire was supplied by the Dutch research team in Dutch in Microsoft Word and was based on the questionnaire developed by DESIRE project partners. CentERdata programmed the questionnaire and provided for a test environment.

### Fieldwork:

Selection of panel members and the fielding of the questionnaire took place over four weeks.

To ensure an optimum response rate, all panel members who have not yet responded are sent a reminder during the fieldwork period (after approximately 2 weeks). A second reminder is sent shortly before the end of the fieldwork period.

The collected data are delivered in the form of a cleaned and labeled SPSS file and the codebook.

### Background checks

The panels used for this study are representative for the population as demonstrated in following tables.

*Tabel 1. Representativeness of the LISS panel, December 2017 (unweighted)*

Variable	Categories	CBS statline	LISS panel December 2017
		<b>2017</b>	
Sex, 16+	Male	49.3	46.4
	Female	50.7	53.6
		<b>2017</b>	
Age	16 - 24 years	13.5	12.3
	25 - 34 years	15.1	15.1
	35 - 44 years	14.8	15.7
	45 - 54 years	18.2	15.5
	55 - 64 years	16.0	17.2
	65 years and older	22.4	24.3
		<b>2017</b>	
Education level, 15+	Elementary school	10.2	8.1
	Preparatory vocational education ( <i>vmbo</i> , <i>mbo1</i> , <i>avo onderbouw</i> )	21.0	19.2
	Intermediate vocational education ( <i>mbo 2, 3, 4</i> )	30.5	24.2
	Higher general secondary education ( <i>havo</i> ), pre-university education ( <i>vwo</i> )	9.1	11.8
	Higher vocational education/university of applied sciences ( <i>hbo</i> )	18.4	24.5
	University	10.7	12.2
		<b>2014</b>	
Net income (household level)	until 10,000 euros	5.7	11.3
	10,000 until 20,000 euros	21.8	14.3
	20,000 until 30,000 euros	24.8	22.6
	30,000 until 40,000 euros	17.0	17.0
	40,000 until 50,000 euros	12.5	13.4
	50,000 euros or more	18.2	21.3

Variable	Categories	CBS statline	LISS panel December 2017
		<b>2014</b>	
Urbanity (household level)	extremely urban	23.3	19.4
	highly urban	27.8	27.1
	moderately urban	19.2	21.3
	slightly urban	20.5	19.1
	not urban	9.2	13.1
		<b>2017</b>	
Province (household level)	Groningen	3.7	4.1
	Friesland	3.7	3.8
	Drenthe	2.8	2.7
	Overijssel	6.4	6.7
	Flevoland	2.2	2.3
	Gelderland	11.6	12.7
	Utrecht	7.4	7.2
	Noord-Holland	17.2	15.6
	Zuid-Holland	21.6	20.9
	Zeeland	2.2	2.2
	Noord-Brabant	14.4	15.2
	Limburg	6.7	6.7
		<b>2017</b>	
Household size (household level)	1 person	38.0	34.3
	2 persons	32.6	34.8
	3 persons	11.9	11.6
	4 persons	12.3	12.9
	5 persons or more	5.2	6.4
		<b>2017</b>	
Domestic situation (household level)	single person household	38.0	34.3
	multiple person household without children	28.3	29.9
	multiple person household with children	26.0	26.5
	single-parent household	7.2	5.7
	other	0.5	3.7
Total number of people, 16+			<b>7443</b>

## POLAND

### Sample

The random sample involve 641 respondents that are representative for the Polish population for age range, gender and size class of the inhabited town of the respondents. To attain comparable proportions a matrix was created containing the 3 chosen demographic variables for the total Polish population. Limits are defined for each cell to shoreline the test sample with the structure corresponding to the population structure of the Poles.

	<b>Do you consider yourself to be:</b>	<b>Total</b>
--	--	--------------

		Male		Female		
		N	%	n	%	
Age category	18-30	67	10.5%	71	11.1%	22%
	31-40	63	9.8%	65	10.1%	20%
	41-50	47	7.3%	48	7.5%	15%
	51-65	83	12.9%	95	14.8%	28%
	>65	48	7.5%	54	8.4%	16%
Total			47%		52%	

### Population in Poland

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Age category	18-30	10.5%	10.8%	21%
	31-40	9.6%	10.1%	20%
	41-50	7.7%	7.7%	15%
	51-65	12.3%	14.0%	26%
	>65	6.7%	10.7%	17%
Total		47%	53%	100%

### Where have you lived for most of your life?

- ☐ Rural **n=227**
- ☐ Urban **n=178**
- ☐ Periurban or small town (in the periphery of a big city or in a small town) **n=113**

### Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed by DESIRE project partners. This English questionnaire was translated into Polish. The survey was carried out using quantitative on line methodology. Questionnaires were self-administered using Computer Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) method.

#### 7.1.2.3. Analyses of the data

Since most of the variables on attitudes and awareness in the public survey are of nominal level (except the variable on 'sex work is inevitable' which is a likert scale and can be treated as an interval variable)  $X^2$  will be used to search for associations between the attitudes and countries. The null hypothesis is always that there is no association between the variables. When the null hypothesis can be rejected it follows that there is an association between the involved variables. Since  $X^2$  is not standardised and difficult to interpret, we also use the uncertainty coefficient (U) that measures the proportion of reduced uncertainty when making prognoses for Y when X is known. U varies from 0 to 1; the higher the more a reduction in uncertainty. In the case of the variable 'sex work is inevitable' that can be interpreted as an interval measure, we use Eta and its square (the correlation ratio). This last measure is easier to interpret and measures the proportion of the total variance in Y explained by X.

## 7.2. Lists of interviewees

### CROATIA

Target Group	Interview Code	Interviewer	Date of interview/scheduled interview	Audio (Y/N)	Consent form (Y/N)	Transcription (Y/N)	Comments
<b>EXPERTS</b>							
E	HR-E1	Iva Jovović	14.03.2018	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E2	Iva Jovović	30.04.2018.	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E3	Iva Jovović	03.04.2018.	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E4	Iva Jovović	04.05.2018.	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E5	Iva Jovović	03.04.2018.	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E6	Iva Jovović	02.05.2018.	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E7	Iva Jovović	04.05.2018	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E8	Iva Jovović	03.05.2018.	N	Y	Y	
M	HR-E9	Iva Jovović	03.05.2018.	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E10	Iva Jovović	04.05.2018.	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E11	Iva Jovović	04.05.2018	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E12	Iva Jovović	09.05.2018.	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E13	Iva Jovović	07.05.2018.	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E14	Iva Jovović	08.05.2018.	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E15	Iva Jovović	07.05.2018.	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E16	Iva Jovović	09.05.2018.	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E17	Iva Jovović	17.05.2018.	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E18	Iva Jovović	17.05.2018.	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E19	Iva Jovović	17.05.2018.	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E20	Iva Jovović	18.05.2018.	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E21	Iva Jovović	18.05.2018.	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E22	Iva Jovović	18.05.2018	N	Y	Y	



E	HR-E23	Iva Jovović	21.05.2018.	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E24	Iva Jovović	21.05.2018	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E25	Iva Jovović	28.05.2018	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E26	Iva Jovović	28.05.2018	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E27	Iva Jovović	29.05.2018.	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E28	Iva Jovović	29.05.2018.	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E29	Iva Jovović	29.05.2018.	N	Y	Y	
E	HR-E30	Iva Jovović	29.05.2018.	N	Y	Y	
<b>SEX WORKERS</b>							
SW	SW/01		27.03.2018	N	Y	Y	
SW	SW/02		06.04.2018	N	Y	y	
SW	SW/03		05.03.2018	N	y	Y	
SW	SW/04		07.03.2018	N	Y	Y	
SW	SW/05		10.03.2018	N	Y	Y	
SW	SW/06		12.03.2018	N	Y	Y	
SW	SW/07		12.03.2018	N	Y	Y	
SW	SW/08		14.03.2018	N	Y	y	
SW	SW/09		21.03.2018	N	Y	Y	
SW	SW/10		11.04.2018	N	Y		
SW	SW/11		04.04.2018	N	Y	Y	
SW	SW/12		16.04.2018	N	Y	Y	
SW	SW/13		10.05.2018	N	Y	y	
SW	SW/14		16.05.2018	N	Y	Y	
SW	SW/15		22.05.2018	N	Y	Y	
<b>BUYERS</b>							
B	B/01		27.02.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/02		21.02.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/03		21.03.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/04		30.03.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/05		04.04.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/06		10.04.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/07		04.04.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/08		02.05.2018	N	Y	Y	

B	B/09		31.05.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/10		09.04.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/11		31.03.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/12		09.04.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/13		07.04.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/14		15.04.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/15		05.05.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/16		17.04.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/17		07.05.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/18		21.04.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/19		13.04.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/20		22.04.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/21		25.04.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/22		01.05.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/23		14.05.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/24		03.05.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/25		17.04.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/26		28.04.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/27		13.04.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/28		05.05.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/29		02.05.2018	N	Y	Y	
B	B/30		07.05.2018	N	Y	Y	

## THE NETHERLANDS

Target Group	Interview Code	Interviewer	Date of interview/scheduled interview	Audio (Y/N)	Consent form (Y/N)	Transcription (Y/N)	Comments
<b>EXPERTS</b>							
E	E/01	Maria Shaidrova	11.04.2018	Y	Y (oral)	Y	
E	E/02	Maria Shaidrova	18.05.2018	Y	Y (oral)	Y	
E	E/03	Maria Shaidrova	25.05.2018	N	Y (oral)	Y (notes)	Interview via phone
E	E/04	Maria Shaidrova	04.06.2018	Y	Y (Oral)	Y	
E	E/05	Maria Shaidrova	04.06.2018	Y	Y (oral)	Y	
E	E/06	Maria Shaidrova	30.04.2018	y	Y (oral)	Y	
E	E/07	Esmah Lahlah	18.05.2018	Y		Y	
E	E/08	Esmah Lahlah	18.05.2018	Y		Y	

E	E/09	Maria Shaidrova		18.05.2018	Y	Y (oral)	Y	
E	E/10	Esmah Lahlah		17.04.2018	Y		Y	
E	E/11	Maria Shaidrova		01.06.2018	Y	Y (oral)	Y	
E	E/12	Maria Shaidrova		09.05.2018	Y	Y	Y	
E	E/13	Maria Shaidrova		09.05.2018	Y	Y (oral)	Y	
E	E/14	Maria Shaidrova		14.05.2018	Y	Y	Y	
E	E/15	Maria Shaidrova		03.05.2018	Y	Y (oral)	Y	
E	E/16	Maria Shaidrova/Mridula Shobinath		12.02.2018	Y	Y (oral)	Y	
E	E/17	Esmah Lahlah		23.05.2018	Y		Y	
E	E/18	Esmah Lahlah		23.01.2018	Y		Y	
E	E/19	Esmah Lahlah		17.05.2018	Y		Y	
E	E/20	Esmah Lahlah		25.05.2018	Y		Y	
E	E/21	Esmah Lahlah		18.05.2018	Y		Y	
E	E/22	Maria Shaidrova		31.05.2018	Y	Y (oral)	Y	
E	E/23	Esmah Lahlah		06.04.2018	Y		Y	
E	E/24	Esmah Lahlah		03.03.2018	N		N (notes)	
<b>SEX WORKERS</b>								
SW	SW/01	Maria Shaidrova	Sex worker (female)	8.05.2018	Y	Y	Y	
SW	SW/02	Maria Shaidrova/Mridula Shobinath	Sex worker (female)	16.06.2018	N	Y(oral)	y	Only field notes
SW	SW/03	Maria Shaidrova (+interpreter)	Sex worker (female)	24.05.2018	Y	Y (oral)	Y	
SW	SW/04	Mridula Shobinath	Sex worker (female)	11.05.2018	Y	Y (oral)	Y	
SW	SW/05	Robin Kuijken/Esmah Lahlah	Sex worker (female)	2.05.2018	Y	Y (oral)	Y	
SW	SW/06	Esmah Lahlah	Sex worker (female)	18.05.2018	Y	Y (oral)	Y	

SW	SW/07	Esmah Lahlah	Sex worker (female)	16.05.2018	Y	Y (oral)	Y	
SW	SW/08	Floris de Meijer	Sex worker (male)	11.07.2018	N	Electronic introduction	Electronic communication	Forum data
SW	SW/09	Maria Shaidrova	Sex worker (female)	15.06.2018	Y	Y (oral)	Y	
SW	SW/10	Maria Shaidrova	Sex worker (female)	12.07.2018	Y	Y (oral)		
SW	SW/11	Floris de Meijer	Sex worker (male)	11.07.2018	N	Electronic introduction	Electronic communication	Forum data
SW	SW/12	Robin Kuijken/Floris de Meijer	Sex worker (male)	16.07.2018	Y	Y (oral)	Y	
SW	SW/13	Online anonymous questionnaire	Sex worker (female)	n/a	N	Consent form incorporated in the questionnaire	Electronic communication	Only electronic notes
SW	SW/14	Floris de Meijer	Sex worker (male)	13.07.2018	N	Electronic introduction	Electronic communication	
SW	SW/15	Floris de Meijer	Sex worker (male)	13.07.2018	N	Electronic introduction	Electronic communication	
SW	SW/16	Floris de Meijer	Sex worker (male)	13.07.2018	N	Electronic introduction	Electronic communication	
SW	SW/17	Floris de Meijer	Sex worker (male)	13.07.2018	N	Electronic introduction	Electronic communication	
SW	SW/18	Floris de Meijer/Jaap Nijland	Sex worker (female)	26.07.2018	Y	Y (oral)	Y	
<b>BUYERS</b>								
B	B/01	Robin Kuijken	Buyer	20.04.2018	Y	Y(oral)	Y	Via phone
B	B/02	Robin Kuijken	Buyer	18.05.2018	Y	Y	Y	
B	B/03	Robin Kuijken/Maria Shaidrova/ Jaap Nijland	Buyer	11.06.2018	N	Y (oral)	N (field notes)	Interview on the spot/field notes

<b>B</b>	<b>B/04</b>	Robin Kuijken/Maria Shaidrova/ Jaap Nijland	Buyer	11.06.2018	N	Y (oral)	N (field notes)	Interview on the spot/fieldnotes
<b>B</b>	<b>B/05</b>	Robin Kuijken/Maria Shaidrova/ Jaap Nijland	Buyer	11.06.2018	N	Y (oral)	N (field notes)	Interview on the spot/fieldnotes
<b>B</b>	<b>B/06</b>	Maria Shaidrova/Robin Kuijken	Buyer	5.06.2018	N	Y (oral)	N(field notes)	Interview on the spot/fieldnotes
<b>B</b>	<b>B/07</b>	Robin Kuijken	Buyer	25.06.2017	Y	Y (oral)	Y	Via phone
<b>B</b>	<b>B/08</b>	Robin Kuijken	Buyer	09.07.2018	Y	Y	Y	
<b>B</b>	<b>B/09</b>	Robin Kuijken	Buyer	12.05.2018	y	Y(oral)	Y	Via phone
<b>B</b>	<b>B/10</b>	Anonymous questionnaire	Buyer	16.07.2018	N	Y	N (electronic version documented)	Consent form incorporate in the questionnaire
<b>B</b>	<b>B/11</b>	Anonymous questionnaire	Buyer	18.07.2018	N	Y	N (electronic version documented)	Consent form incorporate in the questionnaire
<b>B</b>	<b>B/12</b>	Anonymous questionnaire	Buyer	9.07.2018	N	Y	N (electronic version documented)	Consent form incorporate in the questionnaire
<b>B</b>	<b>B/13</b>	Anonymous questionnaire	Buyer	9.07.2018	N	Y	N (electronic version documented)	Consent form incorporate in the questionnaire
<b>B</b>	<b>B/14</b>	Anonymous questionnaire	Buyer	1.07.2018	N	Y	N (electronic version documented)	Consent form incorporate in the questionnaire
<b>B</b>	<b>B/15</b>	Anonymous questionnaire	Buyer	13.07.2018	N	Y	N (electronic version documented)	Consent form incorporate in the questionnaire
<b>B</b>	<b>B/16</b>	Anonymous questionnaire	Buyer	15.07.2018	N	Y	N (electronic version documented)	Consent form incorporate in the questionnaire
<b>B</b>	<b>B/17</b>	Anonymous questionnaire	Buyer	15.07.2018	N	Y	N (electronic version documented)	Consent form incorporate in the questionnaire

<b>B</b>	<b>B/18</b>	Floris de Meijer	Buyer	11.07.2018	N	Y	Notes documented	Forum
<b>VICTIMS</b>								
<b>V</b>	<b>V/01</b>	Maria Shaidrova/Mridula Shobinath	Victim	2.05.2018	Y	Y (oral)	Y	
<b>V</b>	<b>V/02</b>	Maria Shaidrova	Victim	4.06.2018	Y	Y (oral)	Y	

**POLAND**

Target Group	Interview Code	Interviewer	Date of interview/scheduled interview	Audio (Y/N)	Consent form (Y/N)	Transcription (Y/N)	Reporting template (Y/N)	Comments
<b>EXPERTS</b>								
<b>E</b>	<b>E/01</b>	Lukasz Wieczorek	24.01.2018	N	Y	Y		
<b>E</b>	<b>E/02</b>	Lukasz Wieczorek	26.01.2018	Y	Y	Y		
<b>E</b>	<b>E/03</b>	Lukasz Wieczorek	28.02.2018	Y	Y	Y		
<b>E</b>	<b>E/04</b>	Kamila Rejmer	21.01.2018	Y	Y	Y		
<b>E</b>	<b>E/05</b>	Kamila Rejmer	26.01.2018	N	Y (oral)	Y		
<b>E</b>	<b>E/06</b>	Kamila Rejmer	26.01.2018	N	Y (oral)	Y		
<b>E</b>	<b>E/07</b>	ZbigniewLasocik	24.01.2018	Y	N	Y		
<b>E</b>	<b>E/08</b>	ZbigniewLasocik	28.03.2018	N	Y	Y		
<b>E</b>	<b>E/09</b>	Lukasz Wieczorek	18.04.2018	Y	Y	Y		
<b>E</b>	<b>E/10</b>	Lukasz Wieczorek	25.04.2018	Y	Y	Y		
<b>E</b>	<b>E/11</b>	AnetaKokot	22.03.2018			Y		
<b>E</b>	<b>E/12</b>	ŁukaszWieczorek	30.05.2018	Y	Y	Y		
<b>E</b>	<b>E/13</b>	Kamila Rejmer	30.04.2018	Y	Y	Y		
<b>E</b>	<b>E/14</b>	ŁukaszWieczorek	09.05.2018	N	Y	Y		
<b>E</b>	<b>E/15</b>	ZbigniewLasocik	09.05.2018	N	Y (oral)	Y		
<b>E</b>	<b>E/16</b>	ŁukaszWieczorek	17.05.2018	Y	Y	Y		
<b>E</b>	<b>E/17</b>	ŁukaszWieczorek	17.05.2018	Y	Y	Y		



E	E/18	ZbigniewLasocik	16.05.2018	Y	Y	Y		
E	E/19	ŁukaszWieczorek	10.05.2018	Y	Y	Y		
E	E/20	AnetaKokot			Y	Y		
E	E/21	Kamila Rejmer	29.05.2018	Y	Y	Y		interview by Skype
E	E/22	Kamila Rejmer	30.05.2018	Y	Y	Y		
E	E/23	Kamila Rejmer	30.05.2018	Y	Y	Y		
E	E/24	ZbigniewLasocik	29.03.2018	Y	N	Y		
E	E/25	ZbigniewLasocik	02.05.2018	Y	Y	Y		
E	E/26	ZbigniewLasocik	11.06.2018	Y	Y	Y		
<b>SEX WORKERS</b>								
SW	SW/01	Lukasz Wieczorek	12.01.2018	N	Y (oral)	Y		interview by Skype
SW	SW/02	Kamila Rejmer	21.02.2018	Y	Y	y		
SW	SW/03	Lukasz Wieczorek	05.03.2018	Y (partly)	Y (oral)	Y		interview by phone
SW	SW/04	Kamila Rejmer	07.03.2018	N	Y (oral)	Y		interview by phone
SW	SW/05	Lukasz Wieczorek	10.03.2018	Y	Y	Y		
SW	SW/06	Kamila Rejmer Lukasz Wieczorek	12.03.2018	Y	Y	Y		
SW	SW/07	Kamila Rejmer Lukasz Wieczorek	12.03.2018	Y	Y	Y		
SW	SW/08	Kamila Rejmer	14.03.2018	Y	Y	y		
SW	SW/09	Lukasz Wieczorek	21.03.2018	Y	Y	Y		
SW	SW/10	RoksanaKatryńska	11.04.2018	Y	Y			
SW	SW/11	ZofiaWaszak	04.04.2018	N	Y	Y		
SW	SW/12	ZofiaWaszak	16.04.2018	N	Y	Y		
SW	SW/13	Kamila Rejmer	10.05.2018	Y	Y	y		
SW	SW/14	Lukasz Wieczorek	16.05.2018	N	Y	Y		
SW	SW/15	Aleksandra Szumny	22.05.2018	Y	Y	Y		
<b>BUYERS</b>								
B	B/01	Lukasz Wieczorek	27.02.2018	N	Y	Y		
B	B/02	Kamila Rejmer	21.02.2018	Y	Y	Y		
B	B/03	Kamila Rejmer	21.03.2018	N	Y (oral)	Y		interview by phone
B	B/04	Kamila Rejmer	30.03.2018	N	Y (oral)	Y		interview by phone
B	B/05	ŁukaszWieczorek	04.04.2018	Y	Y (oral)	Y		interview by phone

<b>B</b>	<b>B/06</b>	ŁukaszWieczorek	10.04.2018	Y	Y (oral)	Y		interview by phone
<b>B</b>	<b>B/07</b>	AnetaKokot	04.04.2018	N	Y	Y		
<b>B</b>	<b>B/08</b>	SylwiaJabłońska	02.05.2018	N	Y	Y		
<b>B</b>	<b>B/09</b>	Kamila Rejmer	31-05-2018	N	Y (oral)	Y		interview by phone
<b>VICTIMS</b>								
<b>V</b>	<b>V/01</b>	Kamila Rejmer	15.05.2018	N	Y	Y		
<b>V</b>	<b>V/02</b>	ZbigniewLasocik	15.05.2018	Y	Y	Y		

### **7.3. Record of discussions between the University of Warsaw Team and members of an online forum for persons buying sex and persons selling sex regarding participation in research within the DESIRE project.**

**UW team:**

"Dear Sir or Madam,

We are members of a research team at the University of Warsaw and we are looking for people who want to take part in our research as part of a research project called DESIRE (DEmand for Sexual Exploitation In Europe). The project is an international research project, the subject of which is to investigate the issue of forced prostitution. At the same time, the project assumes that not all forms of sexual work are forced. Research is carried out in Poland, the Netherlands, Sweden and Croatia. More information can be found on the project website: <http://project-desire.eu/>

Our goal is to get to know the point of view of clients using sex workers' services on sexual work, sexual exploitation and human trafficking for sexual exploitation. We would also like to know the opinions of men about the legal regulations in Poland. In our opinion, the rights of sex workers and their clients must be better protected, which is why your opinion on this subject and your participation in research is very important.

I assure you of full confidentiality of the information provided to us and the anonymity of the research. If you are interested in participating in the research, please contact:

Tel .: 22 55 22 981

e-mail: [projekt.desire@uw.edu.pl](mailto:projekt.desire@uw.edu.pl)

Address: University of Warsaw, ul. KrakowskiePrzedmieście 3 (room 201), 00-927 Warsaw.

Yours faithfully,  
Project Team"

**Forumer 1:**

"Are you kidding me?

Any opinion incompatible with the all-dominant feminism will be simply DELAYED and its owner will come across the rugged feminists and knock out the windows with stones.

After all, if they are identified, they will be acquitted of acting for the benefit of all, including those who oppose their views.

Even the police stay away from such matters because each male opposition ends with his stoning and the policemen are usually males, despite the parity.

If they even have their opinion - their bosses, however, usually depend on the job."

**Forumer 2:**

"Something is not right here. On the one hand, you examine the issue of forced prostitution (in America they call it sex trafficking) and on the other hand, you write that "In our opinion, the rights of sex workers and their clients must be better protected". In the US, sex trafficking is the main reason why prostitution is illegal. Fortunately in Poland,

prostitution is legal and I hope that nobody will fall for the idiotic idea of delegalization using arguments about sex trafficking. Your research may encourage delegalization.

Besides, a serious scientist (I know a few) never gives an opinion before the end of the research.

It's not good, it's not good that the moderator allowed you to mend this forum.

Well, as usual, speaking to brothers-in-law (polish slang it stands for buyers), omit this pseudo-research."

**Forumer 3:**

"I went to the project website. This is not fake. However, the project leaders have the most successes on the battlefield for rights, among others various minorities or, for example, prisoners. It is difficult to assess what effect this may bring, but just as Forumer 2 has rightly pointed out, this may not necessarily be the desired effect of our esteemed circle. All the more so with the current political climate, you can not exclude anything ..."

**Forumer 4:**

The DESIRE project is as needed as possible. Maybe someday we will see the legalization of prostitution in Poland. : thinks: Prostitution in Poland is not punishable, which does not mean that it is legal. Diva can not register as a "prostitute" in the US and pay taxes for the provision of sexual services, such as in the Netherlands. Prostitution in Poland as opposed to pimping (art.204kk) is not only legally forbidden and prosecuted ex officio.

"Is prostitution legal in Poland?"

<http://jestemlegalna...polsce-legalna/n> (website with article on law regulations in poland)"

**Forumer 5 to forumer 2:**

"Well, something wrong here. First of all, your post can be seen as a larger clutter of the Forum than the title post in this thread. Secondly, I do not see anywhere expressed opinion "before the end of research"? Thirdly, I have the impression that you are an Alf (pimp), and therefore you do not like the study of "forced prostitution". Perhaps, therefore, we will avoid your post?

P.S. There is an email given- who wants to will contact, who does not want contact, will not. Vain beating of foam in this thread does not make sense."

**Forumer 6:**

">>Our goal is to get to know the point of view of clients using sex workers' services on sexual work, sexual exploitation and human trafficking for sexual exploitation. We would also like to know the opinions of men about the legal regulations in force in Poland. In our opinion, the rights of sex workers and their clients must be better protected<<,"

It can not be concealed that the survey / question is with a thesis"

**Forumer 4 to forumer 2:**

"Prostitution in Poland is not punishable, which does not mean that it is legal. Diva (stands for sex worker) can not register as a "prostitute" in the US and pay taxes for the provision of sexual services, such as in the Netherlands. Prostitution in Poland as opposed to pimping (art.204kk) is not only legally prohibited."

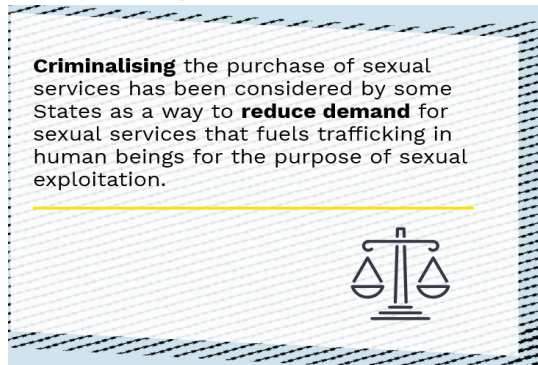
**Forumer 2:**

"In most US states prostitution is illegal and punishable. A month ago, the congress approved a resolution that the media that announce sexual services are responsible for any damage caused to prostitutes. As a result, not only

prostitution but also annulment is illegal. In one night, the FBI arrested the owner of the main internet backpage agency and removed its websites. Same with craigslist. Poor girls are now literally on the street and their brothers and sisters are in despair because they are condemned to super-expensive escort services.”

**Forumer 7:**

“Sorry, but I went to the European site (<http://project-desire.eu/>) and what do we have there? Barbed wire, like in a churchyard, images of women who were abused by bad men, something like this in the middle of the page:



in other words, this is another femi-nazists jihad that wants to punish customers. Let's not be confused by the harsh talks of Polish workers (they got funding for "research") of this something, here we clearly have the submission that prostitution = exploitation of women, so you have to punish customers. You want to put on a neck loop, assume it. Because the proposals to introduce "abolition", aka the "Nordic model", aka "criminalization of beneficiaries" at EU level have already fallen, and this is preparing the ground for further attempts to make criminals from our brothers-in-law (clients) community.”

**Forumer 1:**

“By the way...

I have already learned that collecting all opinions is for me to play some actions later.

Eg prohibiting prostitution.

This is very desirable by non-prostitutes because if prostitution is forbidden - you'll need every sperm whale to fund your holiday in Tunisia to give.

That's how it is in the West in countries where prostitution is banned and the US.

Why did those booms bail out of power?

Because they know that they do not have competition.

To forumer 4:

Prostitution in Poland IS legal, otherwise it would be after the sentence and I too.

I think you are wrong with the term SFORMALIZOWANA, REGULATORY LAW or something like that.”

**Forumer 2:**

“Signs with hands and feet under the opinion of brother-in-law Forumer 7. I really do not intend to blow this thread, but I would like to add some clarification.

I am sure that all brothers-in-law agree with forcing prostitution, exploiting minors and generally sex trafficking are nasty crimes, so the responsible people should be punished. I do not know how it is included in the penal code, but I am sure that there are already relevant paragraphs. The problem of sex trafficking can only be solved by strengthening the law enforcement agencies of criminals and not punishing poor clients who have nothing to do with the committed crime.

Masters magisters, doctors and even habilitants, instead of killing a kitten with a cub and repeating the obvious thesis that sex trafficking is bad, should give money for their pseudo-tests to special officers who should work out a better system of sex traffickers. And leave the customers alone ... I am quite sure that if the user of this forum accidentally fell on a girl looking for a minor or imprisoned, he would slam the door and return to his wife and children.

The title "Project Desire" speaks for itself - it blames our "desire" for crimes."

**Forumer 4:**

"to Forumer 1

Prostitution is not punished in Poland! So, having sex with someone for money, we can not be prosecuted. On the other hand, punishment, pimping and buying are punishable in Poland. Inducing prostitution and facilitating its practice (eg sub-renting a flat) is punishable by imprisonment of up to 3 years, and it can be punished with up to 5 years in prison for gaining profits.

In Poland, there is abolition - the withdrawal from prosecution and the simultaneous absence of any state interference in the world of prostitution. What does it mean? Among others lack of registers, lack of medical and psychological care system, lack of obligatory tests, lack of procedures related to the protection of women threatened by sexual violence and assistance to those who would like to change their profession and environment. In short: prostitution functions outside the state's control.

Consequences include criminalization of prostitutes' environment, physical and psychological violence, growing gray zone, social exclusion .....

You can read more drifterr in the article "Is prostitution in Poland legal?" To which I gave the link below:

[http: //jestemlegalna...polsce-legalna/](http://jestemlegalna...polsce-legalna/)

I am not a lawyer, but in my opinion the author of this article is right in saying that prostitution in Poland is not punished, which does not mean that it is legal.

to Forumer 3

In the largest state of California, both a prostitute and a client face imprisonment for up to a year and / or a thousand dollars fines, while a pimp or a public house owner - from 3 to 6 years imprisonment in a state prison. And despite this, there are brothels under the cover of massage salons. LOL!

Just type in google eg San Diego escort girls, to find a page with beautiful divas offering their services. :grace:

<http://www.dreamgirlssandiego.com/#all>

As you can see the owner of this California shrine of debauchery is not afraid of the American court and advertises its brothel business on the internet. :in order to:

The laws in the USA that you quoted are enforced as in Poland under Article .204kk. Only pimp, which is a dull neck, gets behind bars for sutenerstwo / pusting. After all, at the rubles and departures pimps in the labor department, officially recruit women to work in their brothels without fear of being stopped by the police.

The DESIRE project is not intended to punish clients for the use of prostitutes' services. If anyone harms prostitutes, it is definitely not the client paying for the service, but her pimp, whom she must pay a tribute in the form of a payment from each client or for the shared premises to provide their services. And this tribute often accounts for up to 50% of its income from prostitution! And this is only exploitation! And what in return does a prostitute get from a sutener? Maybe health and pension insurance? Rhetorical question!



Improvement of working conditions and security of prostitutes can only be done by legalizing prostitution, as was done eg in Ontario, Canada or the Netherlands.

Prostitutes there can work legally, pay taxes and have the same right to pension and health benefits as other taxpayers.

But let us be realists, if it has not legalized the prostitution of SLD and PO, it will not be done by PiS. DESIRE and other similar projects will not change anything. Unfortunately....."

**Admin 1 to forumer 4:**

"Quotation

>>And this tribute often accounts for up to 50% of its income from prostitution! And this is only exploitation!<<

It's about 6% less than the state tears from every employee: /

Sorry, I could not resist.

The subject of coercion for prostitution is important, although it is now harder to catch the perpetrators' hand. The splendor times of organized brothels seem to have passed. Now, the "housing" reigns in which they receive 1-3 girls. Therefore, it is harder to pick up pimps, forcing girls to prostitution. It also seems to me that the problem concerns the majority of girls from across the eastern border."

**UW team:**

Answer for forumer 1

"We are able to deal with any criticism. In scientific (empirical) research, it is already true that even hard evidence is contested. However, we are still collecting opinions from "brothers-in-law", so if you are interested in a short conversation, please contact: projekt.desire@uw.edu.pl or call 22 55 22 981

Answer for forumer 3

I think that what we do is not pseudo-research, how the Lord was gracious to express. We are criminologists with quite a lot of experience and we know what we do. And the opinion can be, it is not a crime. However, we do not formulate conclusions from research, because research is ongoing. You have probably mistaken the results of research with an opinion on a topic.

Answer for forumer 4

It is difficult at this stage of research to determine their results, but none of our team members, and they are lawyers, criminologists and psychologists, was not criminalizing the provision of sexual services, because this is a fatal solution especially for women. We assume that the prohibition of paid sexual services will bring this industry to the underground, and therefore will expose people who are even more at risk of abuse or violation of their fundamental rights (human)."

**Forumer 8 (sex worker):**

"And this is how a Croatian report looks like (if someone is interested)

[www.udruga-let.hr/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/DESIRE-3.pptx](http://www.udruga-let.hr/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/DESIRE-3.pptx)

For the Desire project: Studies under which official (governmental institutions) do not subscribe, the representative group of 120 people is a pseudo study at the same level as proving the effectiveness of creams on wrinkles after asking 30 users ...”

**Forumer 2:**

“I am sorry, my brother-in-law (buyer) forumer 8, I am a scientist, I do not sign anything and my research sponsored by several foundations does not pass as pseudo-research (here a smile towards the Grand Inquisitor;) who called me Alf - I will think about changing careers :). But it probably is different in social sciences, the results of which can be used in proposals for legal reforms and political games. I am curious if the Gentlemen of Project DESIRE are sponsored by FNP, to which all brother-in-law pay taxes. Anyway, gentlemen from the University of Warsaw could have been polite to briefly explain:

- 1) research goal
- 2) possible applications
- 3) methods
- 4) possible applications

And where did you take the title that Desire blames for sex trafficking?”

**Moderator:**

“Quotation

>>The subject of coercion for prostitution is important, although it is now harder to catch the perpetrators' hand. The splendor times of organized brothels seem to have passed. Now, the "housing" reigns in which they receive 1-3 girls. Therefore, it is harder to pick up pimps, forcing girls to prostitution. It also seems to me that the problem concerns the majority of girls from across the eastern border.<<

I agree. The topic is important and worth researching.

Gentlemen, we walk around these brothels and we have a clear conscience, because we have not met any child, nor any woman who told us she is being forced.

Do you, as a regular bunch, really think that a girl will tell someone else who came to treat her like a bag of sperm, that she is beaten, raped every day, does not get any money?

Anyway, what would you do, what? Okay, we're assuming that, risking a terrible stench and breaking up the family, we're announcing law enforcement. And how can this Police help these girls? Do you think that girls are waiting for help from the police? Seriously?

And what will the Police do? Close alpha - new ones will appear. Maybe even worse.

Girls forced into prostitution do not want to help the police, because they can report themselves, but often come from pathological families and have a very complex life situation. Do you want to help - it's a job, a flat, ect.

From the point of view of my moderator practice - this problem is a serious challenge and it is worth investigating.

BTW, thesis, purpose of research and ect are clear to me.”

**Forumer 8:**

"I am not a brother-in-law (buyer) ....

The idea of the project itself can be a lofty one, created on the level of an average intelligent junior high school student so that he can be taken seriously.

I am not a scientist but a modest administration technician, but I have had and for sure (as far as prostitutes and their clients are concerned) about statistics and the minimum number of attempts in classes ...

After that, I can not understand why the project's organizers assumed that a potential group of respondents speaks fluent English (no official translation of the site into Polish)

Which also does not inspire confidence (at least on my part). And finally, the project was financed by the EU internal security fund in 2015, with the exception that the European Commission does not bear any responsibility for what the author of the project will present in the report ... and so theoretically he can scratch what he likes ."

**Forumer 1 one to forumer 4:**

"Quote:

>>Prostitution in Poland is not punishable, which does not mean that it is legal.<<

1. And it seemed to me that what is not illegal - it is legal.

2. And what is illegal is punishable.

Well, but for me  $2 + 2 = 4$ , such a slight deviation."

**Forumer 9:**

"Legalization of prostitution is a mockery! The state is to make money on my body? This. Ylby is already a total fall and a call for revolution!"

**Forumer 4:**

"To forumer 1

Or maybe you just do not understand the meaning of the term LEGALIZATION, which in relation to prostitution means only and only the legal regulation of the provision of paid sexual services. : eyelet: Same as in relation to other professions. This legalization of prostitution was carried out many years ago in the Netherlands or quite recently in the Canadian province of Ontario. Interestingly, before prostitution was legalized in those countries, prostitution was not punishable there, just like in Poland.

quotation:

>>It's about 6% less than the state tears from every employee: /<<

You're right! But you must admit that, after all, for this tribute to the state called tax, we receive social benefits, including health, retirement, paid maternity leave and many more. With taxes, the government maintains police, army, courts, maintains and develops roads, etc.

And what is the cost of own pimp that counts up to 50% of toll? How much does it cost to rent an apartment and the means necessary to provide sexual services (condoms, towels, etc.)? It's very easy to count. Haracz, amounting to 50% of the prostitute's income for her pimp, is disproportionate to the own costs borne by her pimp.

Leaving aside, whether you pay for 50% of your pimp for a lot or not. Improving the working conditions and security of prostitutes can be solved in a very simple way. Namely, through the legalization of prostitution and pimping. Let

the pimps also pay the 56% tax for the state, as other taxpayers. Then they will also have to double and spare to make the business profitable, like other entrepreneurs. : To: And prostitutes will be protected by the Labor Code like any other employee. They will be able to legally work independently for themselves as a self-employed person running a sole proprietorship or for a legitimate employer (pimp) in a brothel. Such a system already exists in many civilized countries, to which our beautiful Polish Homeland is unfortunately still not yet. :(“

**Forumer 1:**

“Well.

Legalized and legal are two different words.

Legally legalised - it is not even a word, but a state of existence.

Nothing but go to Miodek. (prof. Miodek is famous polish language tutor)”.

**Forumer 8:**

Mch. Not depending on what Mr. Miodek (here used in a malicious sense to the forumer 1) means by describing something as legal or not legal, it is generally accepted that:

Legal means acceptable by law and society

Not legal or not acceptable by law but acceptable by society, so to avoid conflict of the legal norm with the social norm, law enforcement officers turn a blind eye to certain behaviors / activities.

Criminal or unacceptable by both law and society.

So in practice it looks like this:

Prostitution itself is legal but not legally regulated

Activities that facilitate prostitution and deriving moderate benefits are not legal.

REASONING BIG POTENTIAL BENEFITS.”

**Forumer 7:**

“LEL? But do you distinguish between criminal and civil law? There is a simple rule in criminal law, which is not prohibited, it is allowed or legal. And so it is with prostitution. As for the rest:

Art. 203. Forcing to practice prostitution

Who, by violence, unlawful threat, trick or using a dependency relationship or critical location, leads another person to prostitution,

subject to imprisonment from one to 10 years.

Art. 204. Tidying, pimping and buying

§ 1. Anyone who, in order to obtain financial benefits, persuades another person to practice prostitution or facilitates it, is subject to the penalty of deprivation of liberty from 3 months to 5 years.

§ 2. The penalty specified in § 1 is subject to who derives financial benefits from practicing prostitution by another person.

§ 3. If the person specified in § 1 or 2 is a minor, the offender subject to imprisonment from one to 10 years.

§ 4. (repealed)

Art. 205. Repealed

And that's it. However, what matters of civil law, tax law, etc., prostitution is a gray zone. You can not pay tax on this, but they can punish you for it. Nevertheless, with the current social mood, treating it as a profession by the state is unfortunately not an option."

**Forumer 1:**

"Why, unfortunately?

You think someone would voluntarily give away half of the earned money?

On ZUS and taxes?

Why does everyone who has their own business pay the minimum of what they have to do?

Girls often wrote about the care of the state.

When it comes down to it, you usually pay from your own pocket.

As for the DESIRE project.

I have often seen that innocent interviews are to say that the "hunger of society" wants gender, taxation of air and rainwater, the prohibition of prostitution, wearing sharp noses, accepting refugees from the countries that had wars 20 years ago and building a mosque on DefiladSquare .

And if the Union (EU) enters the game - you have to be cautious twice more considering what is happening now.

The United Nations has called Poland to close the windows of life.

Earlier I read this because a child will not have the chance to meet their parents.

OR BETTER LIKELY.

That is the attitude of the UN.

Give a like."

**Forumer 8 to forumer7 :**

"Actually, social moods are such that every other would sign up with arms and legs to prostitutes and pimps to chop tax, and it's best that 80% ... and that's what the state is obliged to do this year (by the EU) ) to include not only the income from the gray economy (what the prostitute earns) but also the black zone (what earns a sutener), so how will they start counting ... even the best economists and sociologists are not able to predict the reaction of the heads of state; )"

**Forumer 2:**

"Well, my brothers-in-law talk and the designers have got water on their lips and do not deign to answer questions about the purpose, methods and possible applications of their research".