



Sex work in the Netherlands

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Sex work locations in the NL



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Dutch Sex Work Legislation

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Brothels banned in the Netherlands in 1911 to protect sex workers from exploitation.

Brothels were illegal, but tolerated until 1 October 2000: two articles were removed from the Criminal Code and the ban on brothels and pimping lifted.

Sex work has never been illegal in the Netherlands, provided it was voluntary.



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Why was the ban on brothels lifted?

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Aims:

- Control and regulate the business
- Protect the position of SWs, protect minors
- Decrease the link between sex work and crime
- Enhance safety in clubs, brothels: safe sex norm, fire department regulations, etc.
- Collect income tax

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Legal Context

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Legal context of sex work since 2000

- Sex clubs, brothels and escort services are legal businesses, but are subordinated to a local license system
- It is legal to run a business where men or women over the age 18 years old are voluntary employed as sex workers



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Legal Context (2)

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- The law was changed by the National government
- Local authorities (municipalities) formulate and implement policies on prostitution and are responsible for issuing licenses for brothels & clubs; regulation of management, regulation of premises



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Safe Sex Policy

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The majority of municipalities included the 'safe sex policy' into their license system:

- Brothels only can offer safe sex (otherwise they lose their license)
- Brothels have to give easy access to health educators
- Brothels have to give sex workers the possibility to have medical check-ups
- Medical check ups have to follow the guidelines for STI control which means NO mandatory testing



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State of affairs in the sex business

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Facts and Figures

Before 2000 there were:

- About 1200 clubs and private houses
- More than 3000 window brothels
- Tolerance zones for street prostitution in the 4
- Biggest cities and in 4 province towns

In 2011 there are:

- Less than 450 clubs and private houses
- Less than 1000 window brothels
- 5 Regulated working areas for street prostitution
- Increase in (private) escort

The actual number is unknown: internet



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Newly proposed law

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In 2009 a new bill on sex work was formulated.
(with the purpose of combating human trafficking)

Key issues:

- Mandatory registration for all sex workers
- Criminalization of clients
- National license system for internet & escort
- Age from 21 years



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When sex work is forbidden (1)

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Consequences for sex workers

- Hiding population
- Increased marginalisation and stigmatisation
- Increased risk of pimping
- Increased risk for blackmail
- Bad negotiation position towards clients



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When sex work is forbidden (2)

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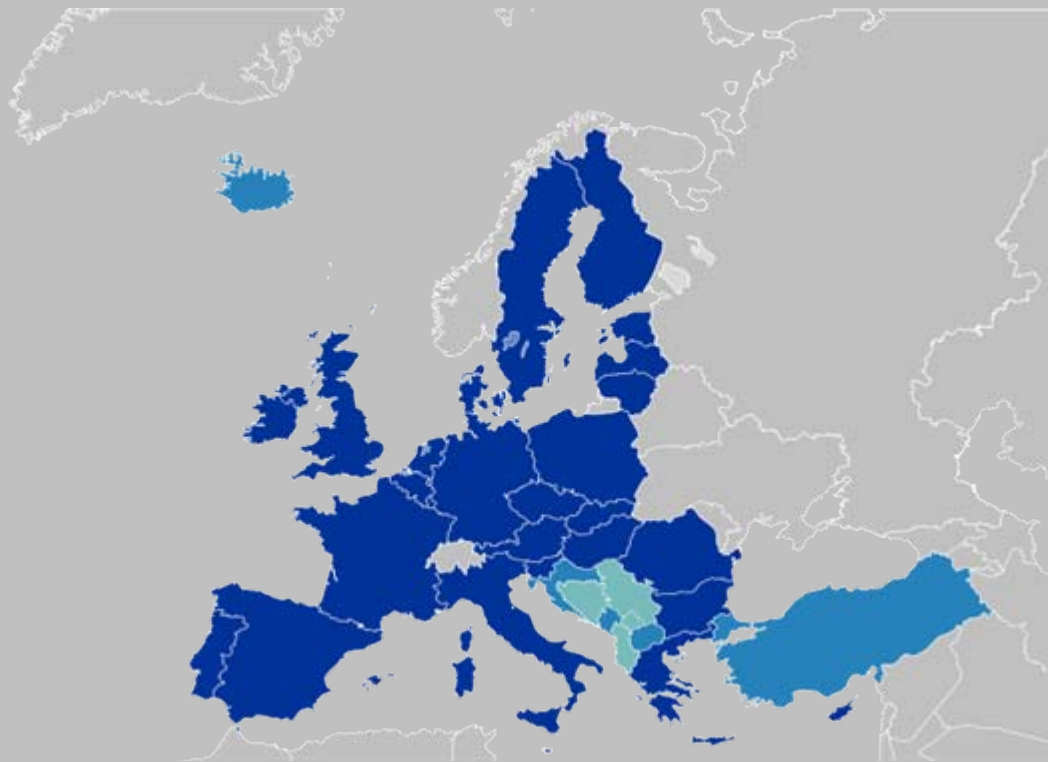
Consequences for the health system

- Services not adapted to the needs of sex workers
- No confidentiality
- Problems in relation to payment/insurance
- Delivery of profitable services: i.e. prescription of contraception can be less profitable for MDs than abortion
- Consequences for sex workers
- Avoiding the health system
- Inadequate counselling and treatment

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Migrant Sex Workers in the NL

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Problems of migrant sex workers

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- Language
- Poor knowledge of social map
- Poor knowledge of sexual health
- Increase change of STI/HIV transmission
- High abortion rates



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How to tackle these problems

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- Support and information
- Prevention
- Empowerment



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Methods

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- Services are easy accessibility and free of charge; anonymous and flexible opening hours
- Outreach work, Peer education and informers in own language
- Chain partners and fast help: public health service providers, social work, cultural mediators, lawyers



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Challenges

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- The expansion of the EU will continue, This will effect the sex industry
- Migration is a human right
- Importance to reach the migrants and inform them about working conditions in the Netherland, ie sex work
- Gouvernements should take the responsibility for economical migrants



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Challenges 2

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- We have to work on Best Practices
- Cultural gaps: should migrants work according own cultural values or the Dutch values?



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