

Speech of the rally on 02.06.2021 for the International Whores' Day.

The reason for the rally is the International Whores' Day. This is a day of action for more rights for sex workers. The day of action started on 2 June 1975 in Lyon, France, where more than 100 sex workers occupied a church and initiated a European sex workers' movement.

Surely some will wonder why we, iBUS, are here and not sex workers personally. This is due to the fact that sex workers are still strongly stigmatised. That is why we, iBUS, are here today as an interest group and denounce the grievances brought to us. Sex workers must be perceived as independent actors and their voices heard. We don't want to have to speak for sex workers any longer, but to help sex workers to get as many rights as possible, to push for destigmatisation in society and to empower sex workers so that they can speak for themselves.

Sex work is regulated in Austria. The core regulations regarding taxes, social insurance and compulsory examinations are made by the federal government, all other regulations are decided individually by the federal states. In Tyrol, sex work is regulated by the Tyrolean Police Act. The legal situation in Tyrol is such that one can legally work only in brothels (and in permit zones, of which there are de facto none).

Sex work can only be carried out as a self-employed activity: This is important because sex workers are not subject to instructions. Working as a self-employed person should guarantee that sex workers can decide for themselves which service they want to provide with which client and at what price.

**SEX WORK IS WORK!** All people have a right to free choice of profession and also to sexual self-determination. Sex work must be perceived as a social reality. Sex workers must have the right to shape their lives in a self-determined and responsible way. The legal discrimination of sex workers compared to other occupational groups is an expression of social moral concepts and must not influence the legislature: Labour rights must be at the centre of debates. Sex workers are not selling their bodies, but a service!

The covid pandemic has significantly worsened the precarious situation of sex workers in Austria. Sex workers are exposed to unequal treatment and discrimination. Unlike other self-employed people, they often fall through all safety nets and have hardly any possibilities to claim state benefits.

The reasons for this are, on the one hand, the approach of domestic banks, which refuse to grant bank accounts to sex workers. On the other hand, many sex workers still have to pay their taxes through brothel operators and do not have their own tax number. Another problem is undercover investigations by the executive (specifically, police officers posing as clients), which were already gross human rights violations before the pandemic and have been stepped up since the first lockdown.

Contrary to what is communicated by politicians, the legally prescribed compulsory examinations are not real health examinations: Only some of the possible sexually transmitted diseases are examined and they are not gynaecological examinations. These compulsory examinations are used as control instruments, which can easily lead to discrimination.

We therefore demand a low-threshold, voluntary access to check-ups, where sex workers are not exposed to the arbitrariness of the authorities.

Sex workers should be protected from directives through their self-employment and thus be able to preserve their sexual integrity and sexual self-determination. However, it is the case that many instructions are given by brothel operators: We know from reliable sources that prices for services are set and that working hours are often not freely determined. Also, the sex workers are often stripped of their health books. Many of the sex workers do not have their own tax number and no possibility to take out social insurance. Price agreements between the different brothels cannot be ruled out!

We demand the decriminalization of sex work! Decriminalization means the abolition of all measures under criminal law that affect sex work. This means the actual equality of sex work with other gainful employment. Decriminalization would improve the living and working conditions of sex workers. Only rights protect against exploitation. Abuses can only be reported if there is no threat of punishment.

Due to the current regulation in Tyrol, sex workers are restricted in their rights and can only enforce their existing rights with difficulty. We therefore demand

- the decriminalization of sex work and thus the equality of sex work to other professions
- and the possibility of other forms of legal sex work! Only if sex workers have the possibility to work legally in other forms can bogus self-employment and other problems be prevented!

**SEX WORK IS WORK! SOLIDARITY INSTEAD OF REPRESSION!**