

Impact of COVID-19 on sex work & Pro-tukipiste services in Finland

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Online-conference on HIV and TB services
during COVID-19 pandemic



  @protukipiste
pro-tukipiste.fi

What is Pro-tukipiste?

- A 30 years old NGO that provides services for people working in the sex and erotic industry
- The target group includes people involved in survival sex (ie. trading sex for food, accomodation or drugs) or sugar dating (ie. trading sex for luxury goods)
- The target group includes also victims of trafficking related sexual exploitation
- Advocates and provides grass root information for decision making processes regarding sex work and human trafficking related to social policies
- Our aim is to advance the involvement and human rights of sex-and erotic workers and victims of human trafficking
- We provide professional low threshold support, advice, health services and community involvement activities



Pro-tukipiste services prior to COVID-19

Low threshold services in three Units (Helsinki, Tampere, Turku)

- Drop-in service and online-chat
- Outreach work (outdoors, indoors, Internet)
- Individual support (health /social) via all forms of provided services

Community involvement activities

- Group meetings face to face
- Visits, cultural and recreation activities

Nationwide Prop up-project/2018-2020 (outreach, face to face , networking)



How has COVID-19 impacted Pro-tukipiste services in 2020?

- Drop-in, group meetings and face to face support **on hold** from March-June
- Outreach work (outdoors & indoors) **on hold** from March-June
- Nationwide Prop-up project **on hold** (all face to face work)

NEW ALTERNATIVES TO COMPENSATE SERVICES

- Starting daily online-chat and on-call telephone support service
- Starting peer group support meetings on-line (Discord-platform)
- Expanding on-line outreach work
- Development of active communication via social media (Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Line)
- Giving out financial support packages as crisis intervention (food, vouchers, safer sex materials)



How has COVID-19 impacted Pro-tukipiste services in 2020?

FROM JUNE 2020 ONWARDS (following corona safety guidelines)

- Start of weekly "Take away"- service in each Unit
- Start of face-to face support and testing for STI's by appointment only
- Start of restricted outreach work outdoors & indoors
- Start of restricted face to face, nationwide Prop up- work (from September 2020 onwards)
- STI testing during outreach- a pilot using a mobile unit, completed with success
- Workshops with groups of gender and sexual minority refugees on sexual rights & sexual health
- Learning videos on how to use email & on-line services for thai people

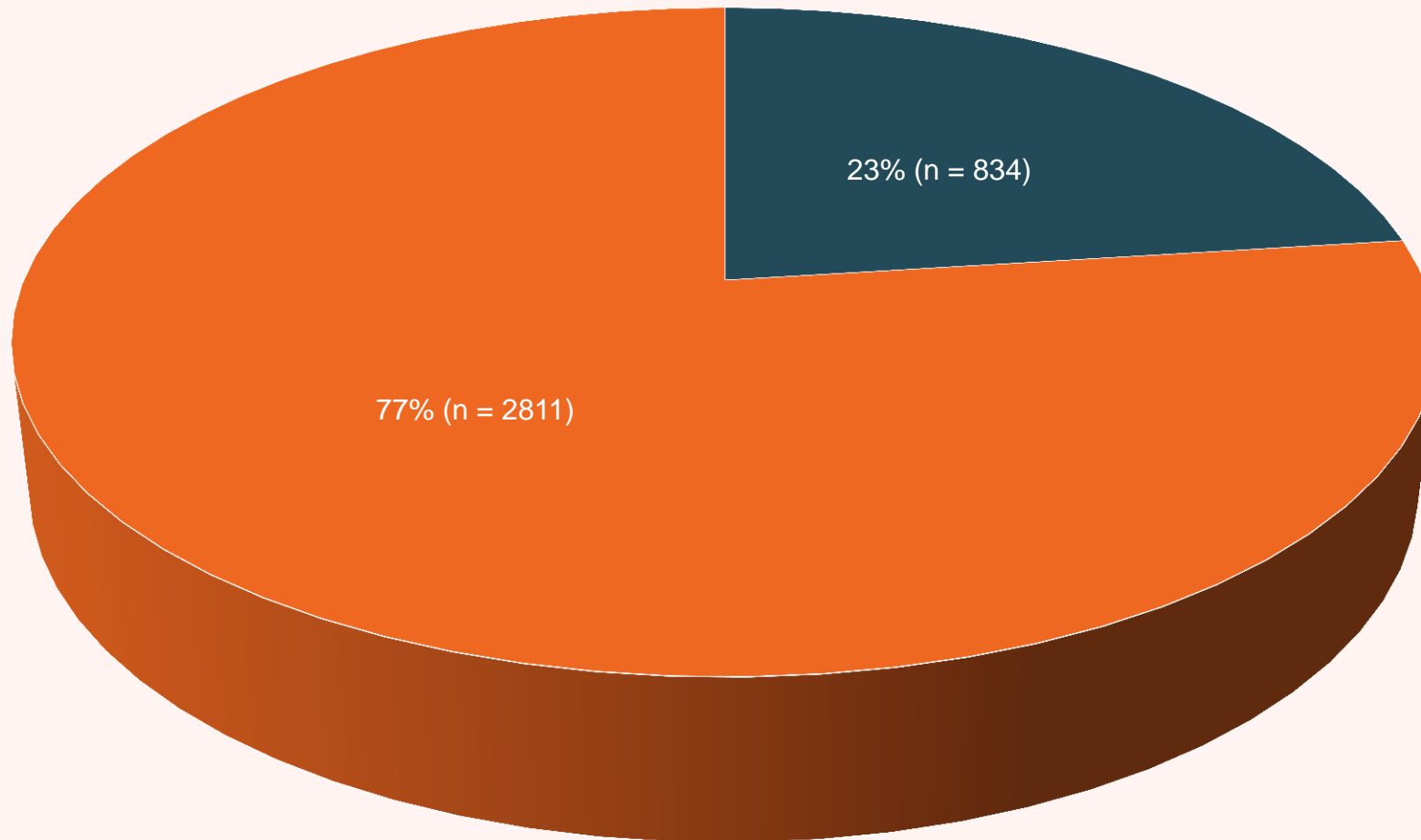
Drop-in and face to face group activities still on hold

The need for anonymous STI testing has increased (also amongst general population) due to limited availability of access to public services



One to one work, 16th March – 16th December 2020 (n= 3645)

Uusi = tavataan ensimmäistä kertaa missä tahansa työmuodossa. Uusi = kun tulee Pro-tukipisteeseen fyysisiin tiloihin, vaikka olisi tavattu etsivässä työssä tai puhelimesta/sähköpostilla.



How has COVID-19 impacted sex and erotic workers in Finland? (anecdotal evidence)

- Social isolation, loneliness and mental health problems in increase
- For some work opportunities and income has increased, for majority radical decrease in both
- The gap between different sections is getting steeper - especially undocumented migrants, trans sex workers and women of colour face discrimination and violence
- Difficult financial situation makes people more vulnerable:
 - Forced to change service selection reluctantly
 - Bargaining power in regards safer sex practices is compromised
 - Bargaining power in choosing clientele is compromised
 - Threat of violence appears increased



How has COVID-19 impacted sex and erotic workers in Finland?

- Problems with receiving adequate information of COVID-19 and guidelines in order to keep safe: apparent especially amongst mobile population and immigrants
- Worldwide many societies have supported businesses financially, but sex and erotic workers have been mainly excluded from this type of support
- Due to travel restrictions some people have "got stuck", unable to return to their home countries or vice versa
- Prevention of hiv & other STI's is compromised due to increased focus in corona prevention efforts



Where is the focus of Pro-tukipiste in the future?

- Development of innovative community involvement activities: responding to changing trends and needs
- Increasing co-operation with other services (NGO's and public sector) both nationally and internationally
- Advocating for human rights of sex workers and victims of trafficking
- Development of innovative digital and on-line services
- Further emphasis on communication and utilization of social media (both in reaching clients and advocating policy)



Responding swiftly to the pandemic, while ensuring that humanitarian and recovery assistance reaches those most vulnerable, including sex workers and victims of human trafficking, is critical.



Thank you!
Спасибо!

Pro-tukipiste

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Get in contact! Свяжитесь с нами!

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