Final Report from the study of the federal model project

Support for Leaving Prostitution

Abridged Version

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Contents

Foreword

This is the abridged version of the final report from the extended evaluation and research study (*wissenschaftliche Begleitung*) commissioned for the federal model project "Support for Leaving Prostitution" and carried out by SPI Forschung gGmbH in Berlin and the Sozialwissenschaftliches FrauenForschungsInstitut in Freiburg (SoFFi F.). The evaluation and research commenced on 1 November 2011, approximately two years after the start of the model project, and went on for three years and seven months, ending on 31 May 2015.

The aim of the evaluation and research study was to gain information and knowledge. It sought to capture facets of reality – sex workers' lives and working conditions and the factors that help them leave prostitution – and to make the results available for practical action and policy decisions. Contact to the sex workers in this report was made via specialized counseling centers offering programs for leaving prostitution. Our research therefore focused on the views of those seeking to stop doing sex work, and as such makes no statements about this work in general.

A word on our own role: the right place for those doing scientific research is "betwixt and between". This place can be quite uncomfortable. It is important to develop an unbiased view and – especially with respect to this particular topic – to not be co-opted by any side or set of interests in the polarized debate on prostitution.

We would like to thank the interviewees for their willingness to speak with us, the staff members of the model project and their partner organizations for their constructive support and willingness to provide information about their day-to-day work, and the Federal Ministry (BMFSFJ) for entrusting us with carrying out this study.

The SPI/SoFFi F. evaluation and research team

I.
Key results from the report on the federal model project "Support for Leaving Prostitution"

This evaluation of the federal model project clearly shows that sex workers face stigmatization and exclusion. As long as that remains the case, specific counseling and support programs will be needed to reach this target group and work with them in open and non-judgmental ways.

The work at the three locations of the federal model project demonstrated in impressive form how the processes of leaving prostitution and embarking on new pathways can succeed by means of: 1) individual support and assistance for clients; and 2) close cooperation among specialized counseling centers, exit programs, and training institutes including job centers.

Results from the different regions of this model project indicate that at least one in ten of all sex workers depends on counseling and support to take new personal and career paths.

For further results and conclusions, see section 5 of this abridged version of the final report.

II.
Introduction

2.1 The federal model project

Women and men who seek to leave prostitution[1] and need support in doing so form a very heterogeneous group, which means that very different types of support are needed. To gain a more precise picture of these needs, and to test possible support programs on a model basis, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) commissioned the "Support for Leaving Prostitution" (*Unterstützung des Ausstiegs aus der Prostitution*) project at three locations in Germany for a five-year period from 2009 through 2014. This project was expected to create and test support structures that address the circumstances of the target group and the specific features of the exit or transition processes. At the same time, it was to systematically expand joint efforts with job market integration programs to facilitate access and make better use of these programs' instruments and specialized expertise for the target group.

A major impetus for this model project came from the Report by the Federal Government on the Impact of the Act Regulating the Legal Situation of Prostitutes (Prostitution Act) (BMFSFJ 2007a),[2] which was also commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) and supplemented by an evaluation of support programs for leaving prostitution. This evaluation clearly showed that in 2007, essentially no exit-support programs existed on the state level in Germany and only occasionally on the municipal level (BMFSFJ 2007b).

The three locations at which the model project took place (Berlin, Nuremberg, Freiburg/Kehl) have different prostitution milieus and support structures. They were selected with the intent of applying the project results to other regions with similar respective profiles. The model project used different approaches and methods at the three locations.

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1   The terms used in this report reflect our actual experience in studying the model project. We therefore speak of a personal and professional "transition" when sex workers seek new pathways that do not strictly break with their past. We use "exit" when they seek an immediate break. We use the term "milieu", because it precisely reflects what we studied: from the perspective of our interviewees, we cannot discern a sex work "industry" with transparent structures as in other sectors. We use "clients" to refer to individuals in the counseling process and "participants" for those attending courses. Unless otherwise indicated, all of these individuals are female. And finally, we use the terms "sex worker" and "prostitute" synonymously.

2   Available in English at: http://www.bmfsfj.de/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Broschuerenstelle/Pdf-Anlagen/bericht-der-br-zum-prostg-englisch,property=pdf,bereich=bmfsfj,sprache=en,rwb=true.pdf

In Berlin, a large city of around 3.5 million inhabitants with a pronounced prostitution milieu, the federal model project sponsored the DIWA project run jointly by Hydra e. V., a counseling center with many years of extensive access to the target group, and Goldnetz e. V., a job training and integration service with experience serving groups with special needs. For the DIWA project, Hydra's social workers contacted the participants and provided psychosocial counseling and support, while Goldnetz arranged job qualification and preparation programs.

In Nuremberg, a medium-sized city and metropolitan administrative center with a traditional prostitution milieu, the federal model project supported the OPERA project. It too was based on the work of a long-term counseling center for prostitutes, KASSANDRA e. V., which set up a training center at a different location from its counseling facilities. In addition to counseling and training services, OPERA also provided a social meeting space for its clients.

In the Freiburg/Kehl region, which combines an urban setting with a semi-rural area along the French border, the federal model project supported the Diakonisches Werk (aid organization of the Protestant Church). This area had not had any prostitution-specific counseling centers before. The P.I.N.K. project provided individual counseling and support for sex workers in the city of Freiburg plus the border town of Kehl and the surrounding district of Ortenau.

2.2 The evaluation and research study

The extended evaluation and research study (*wissenschaftliche Begleitung*) carried out by the consortium of SoFFI F. and SPI Forschung gGmbH was commissioned to monitor the processes and evaluate the results of the federal model project. Its first task was to evaluate the project itself, by applying specific criteria to assess the work at the three locations and make recommendations for practice. Its second task consisted of process control, expert consultancy and support, and steering-group coordination. It also established an advisory council of national and regional experts to critically monitor the evaluation work.

The study's key questions were the following:
❙ What are the location-specific framework conditions, and how important are they for designing and implementing the respective project strategies?
❙ Which target groups are reached, and what are the successful ways of doing so?
❙ What social, professional, and biographical background conditions do the clients bring to the project?
❙ What individual and structural obstacles are there to receiving public assistance and job training, and how can they be overcome?
❙ What need for support can be defined, and what programs cover this need?
❙ Do the programs at the three locations address clients' background conditions?
❙ Do existing job market instruments meet the needs of this target group?
❙ Do the support and training measures have a sustainable effect?

Based on these questions, qualitative and quantitative survey instruments were developed, as well as a joint project instrument called "Defining, measuring and presenting success" that established criteria and indicators along with measurement tools and sources (quantitative and

qualitative processes). The criteria for success are presented in detail in the unabridged version of this final report.

The following data were collected:

- Reports from the three project locations and processed material from the steering group and the advisory council
- 29 semi-narrative interviews at two points in time with 20 sex workers in the process of leaving prostitution with or without support from the model project
- 20 guideline-based interviews with 11 project staff members
- 22 interviews with experts from different fields: job placement, training institutes, immigration authorities, public health agencies, welfare organization, regional and municipal policy makers
- 12 subsequent interviews with entities external to the project: specialized counseling centers for prostitutes, specialized counseling centers for victims of human trafficking, public health agencies, occupational training providers, Caritas and Diakonisches Werk offices, projects for leaving prostitution
- Socio-demographic and project-specific data in an Internet-supported documentation system for 256 cases

2.3 Theoretical framework

2.3.1 Current state of research

There is widespread public debate on sex work in Germany in 2015, but there have been comparatively few empirical studies. Moreover, most of the studies in Germany have been done without many resources and therefore are of limited scope and not widely known (Döhring 2014). Current international research often concentrates on street-level prostitution and on the interface between sex work and drug use, and seldom covers the overall and very complex spectrum of sex work. To provide a background for our results, this section looks at recent literature on exiting and transitioning from sex work.

The following studies take a more detailed look at sex work as an **occupation**: Ward and Day (2006) provide important information on the exit motives and associated opportunities, both used and unused, for sex workers in London. Leopold and Steffan (1997) analyze the social and psychological situations of 260 sex workers in Germany during the exit process, showing high levels of social and psychological stress and a strong need for support. Dalla and Williamson (2010) identify four different exit models from street-level prostitution. Bilardi et al. (2011) focus on sex workers' level of satisfaction with their work

Motives for leaving prostitution are extremely heterogeneous and complex, and exit programs can only be effective if they meet these different needs (Leopold and Steffan 1997; Steffan and Kerschl 2004; Mayhew and Mossman 2007; BMFSFJ 2007b; Kavemann and Fischer 2006; Hester and Westmarland 2004).

Some studies focus on the **life histories** of women in prostitution, and find connections to abuse or other hardships in childhood (Roe-Sepowitz 2012; Mayhew and Mossman 2007). Positive motives for entering prostitution include examples set by other sex workers and the desire for flexible working times, and above all the expectation of greater income than from other unqualified jobs (Mayhew and Mossman 2007).

National and international literature point largely to **economic motives** for both entering and leaving prostitution (Leopold and Steffan 1997; Gangoli and Westmarland 2006; Svanström 2006; Strobl 2006). For many women, however, the primary reason for wanting to leave prostitution seems to derive from mental, physical, and/or economic burn-out (Leopold und Steffan 1997).

The international literature emphasizes the importance of individual, comprehensive, exit support programs that include ways of coping with social marginalization as well as stabilization and support mechanisms for vulnerable target groups (Bury 2011, Oselin 2014). Mayhew and Mossman (2007) studied the exit motivations of sex workers in New Zealand, and present several models described as best practice. Finally, of note is the overview of studies on sex work from Spice (2007), as well as the recent publication from University College of London/UCL Institute of Health Equity (2014) which summarizes studies of sex workers' health, of support programs, and of exit strategies and their results. These works highlight the significance of stigmatization, as well as of racism in the case of migrants.

2.3.2 Identity constructs and stigma

Studies on the conditions needed to leave prostitution address not only practical concerns for support programs, but also theoretical issues such as identity constructs, stigma, push and pull factors, and notions of a "good life". Our analysis also addresses some of these.

Cimino (2012) examines the interaction of individual and social components, and highlights "agency" as a factor that must be present for a transition to succeed. The "whore stigma" (*Hurenstigma*) has recently been the object of intensive discussion. Many authors suggest that because no social value is attached to prostitution, sex workers are stigmatized and excluded from access to support (Sanders 2007, Macioti 2014). A common double set of problems found in prostitution consists of stigmatization as a sex worker and discrimination as a migrant.

Many studies refer to Goffman's ground-breaking sociological analysis of stigmatization (1963). He describes stigma as an attribute by which individuals are considered "not normal" – and which also taints and discredits their social identity. In the case of sex workers, the devaluation and exclusion they face thwarts or greatly impedes their efforts to take up other occupations. For Link and Phelan (2001), the attribute or label as such is not the stigma but rather the complex of negative interpretations thereof, plus the social rejection based on this interpretive framework. Individuals who face stigmatization have to organize their lives such that they do not constantly encounter these stressful situations, or such that the people close to them also face the stigma. This requires stigma management (Goffman 1963) for all parts of daily life. For sex workers it means having to present different versions of their identity and employment in different contexts or everyday parts of their lives.

Deitz et al. (2015) distinguish between cultural stereotypes, public stigma, and self stigma. They show that public stigma can lead to anticipating exclusion from parts of society, and that self stigma, by contrast, consists of internalizing these discrediting beliefs or treatment. Self stigma can manifest itself in feelings of shame, devaluation, and humiliation that not only prevent or impede social inclusion, but also damage mental health (ibid. p. 602). When sex workers internalize the social devaluation of their work, they also devalue themselves as people, which directly affects their self-esteem and identity. This blurs the difference between who they are and what they do.

In a study of 24 British sex workers, Dodsworth (2012) concludes that adverse or damaging childhood experiences play a role in coping with the stresses of sex work. She identifies three groups of sex workers: 1) "it's who I am"; 2) "it's what I do"; and 3) "I can't let it be who I am". She concludes that the ability to leave sex work depends on whether the individual finds support and approval, whether the feeling of being "different" leads to a sense of defeat or strengthened resolve, whether coping mechanisms are helpful or maladaptive, and – very key – whether the individual can experience a "secure base" in whatever form (ibid. p. 532). These findings provide valuable pointers for the content of counseling sessions and for the personal relationship between the counselor and the sex worker. When they contact prostitution-specific counseling centers, sex workers can be open about their type of work, because they are neither discredited nor discreditable there. The center as a place, the counselor as a person, and the program as a combination of information and relationship build a bridge between the world of sex work and the "conventional" world (*bürgerliche Welt* – Petzold 2003).

Petzold's concept of "social worlds" (2003, p. 1) provides an explanatory framework for the transition from sex work to the "conventional world" (*bürgerliche Welt*). He notes that identity arises not only in an individual's interaction with social groups or society, but also in a lifelong dynamic process "constituted in large part by the assignment of attributes, abilities, etc. by others and by the perception and assessment of such assignments" (ibid. p. 8). As such, sex workers' identity arises from their interaction with the world of sex work on the one hand, and from the associated labels on the other. When leaving this work, they seek another identity and integration in other social groups – another social world. The labels that link each individual to her earlier identity, however, do not disappear; they kick into effect again as soon as the past becomes known. Leaving prostitution should therefore be understood not only as a transition to a different type of activity but also as a deep-seated process in which sex workers must be flexible and skilled in shaping their identities in stigmatizing, exclusionary environments.

III.
Building bridges:
Services for the exit process

The support programs in the federal model project reached their target group by means of publicity or low-threshold outreach. Their facilities were open to anyone with direct experience in sex work; they did not require individuals to be leaving the work or seeking to do so. The basic offer consisted of psychosocial counseling, plus accompaniment to institutions and government agencies. An additional focus was placed on building local or regional networks to support the exit process for the target group. For job training and placement, the three locations either offered their own services or arranged the services of other providers.

3.1 Project reach

The federal model project was run at locations with very different traditions and milieus of sex work as well as support structures. The estimated number of sex workers at the three locations ranged from 420 to 8,000, and the milieus ranged from red-light streets/districts to open street-based work. The percentage of women from new EU countries rose at all the locations, although not necessarily the estimated number of sex workers overall.[3]

The publicity strategies at the three locations consisted primarily of outreach,[4] followed by referrals from other organizations or institutions, and only then by advertisements in tabloids and online. In Nuremberg and the neighboring cities of Fürth and Erlangen, the project was publicized as part of regular street work by the KASSANDRA specialized counseling center and the public health agency. At the Freiburg/Kehl location with additional responsibility for the southern part of the state of Baden and the district of Ortenau including the border area to France, outreach was done in connection with other projects (e.g. AIDS programs, public health agencies, and the FreiJa counseling center for victims of human trafficking). This was the only option due to the lack of specialized counseling centers in the area at that time. In the large city of Berlin, the project's outreach was limited in scope due to the widely distributed and diffuse milieu, plus the limited personnel resources at the Hydra specialized counseling center which allow only one visit per establishment per year. Experts from other relevant projects and public health agencies interviewed for this study also emphasized the importance of outreach for making contact with sex workers and for publicizing programs. More recent means of electronic contact (e.g. smartphone apps) unfortunately could not be tested in the course of this model project.[5]

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3   Estimates in Berlin and Nuremberg are similar to those from the 1990s (Leopold et al. 1994)
4   See also Steffan and Arsova Netzelmann (2015)
5   e.g. the Madonna counseling center for sex workers in Bochum (MGEPA 148 2014, p. 23, www.lola-nrw.de)

This study assumes that each location has a comparable need for counseling and support. We have therefore calculated the reach of the three subprojects based on the respective estimated overall number of persons involved in sex work at that location.

Fig. 1: Project reach

Project: location	Overall number of sex workers (2014 estimates)*	Number of clients reached (end of 2014)	Project reach
DIWA: Berlin	6,000 to 8,000 sex workers in the city of Berlin Estimates from Hydra, police, and public health agency	Reached: 126 Cases documented: 71	approx. 1 in 48-63 sex workers
OPERA: Nuremberg	1,200 to 1,500 sex workers in the Nuremberg administrative area Estimates from police, public health agency, and KASSANDRA	Reached: 142 Cases documented: 103	approx. 1 in 9-10 sex workers
P.I.N.K.: Freiburg, Kehl, Ortenau district	420-600 sex workers in Freiburg and the border region to France Estimates from P.I.N.K., city of Freiburg, AIDS counseling in Offenburg and French partner project	Reached: 94 Cases documented: 82	approx. 1 in 4-6 sex workers

These estimates do not take usual milieu-based fluctuations into account. However, we assume this is similar overall and thus comparable.

source: Final report (unabridged) from the study of the federal model project "Support for Leaving Prostitution", May 2015

These figures show the different reaches of the project at its different locations. Some distortions may be assumed, however, which we describe below:

In Berlin, we assume that the project reached a lower percentage of sex workers seeking support than at the other two locations, and that some sex workers turn to other projects and facilities. These include the city's public health agencies, which also do outreach and offer comprehensive counseling and services for this target group. For **Berlin**, we therefore assume that the **DIWA project underreports the number of sex workers seeking support.**

In Freiburg and Kehl, the personnel at P.I.N.K. were the only counselors on the subject of sex work. They had to address all the concerns of these workers, and could not refer them elsewhere. For **Freiburg including southern Baden and the Ortenau district**, we therefore assume that the **P.I.N.K. project over-reports the number of sex workers seeking support.**

In Nuremberg, the project divided its responsibilities between the KASSANDRA counseling center and the OPERA job training and exit program. The city also has a clear structure to its social outreach work, and clear access to the sex work milieu. For Nuremberg, we therefore assume that the **OPERA project's support and counseling for sex workers seeking new personal and career pathways is approximately equal to the need.**

The research group recommends that for each area, regional infrastructure planning should assume that at least one in ten sex workers currently active is in need of counseling and support for personal and/or career transition.
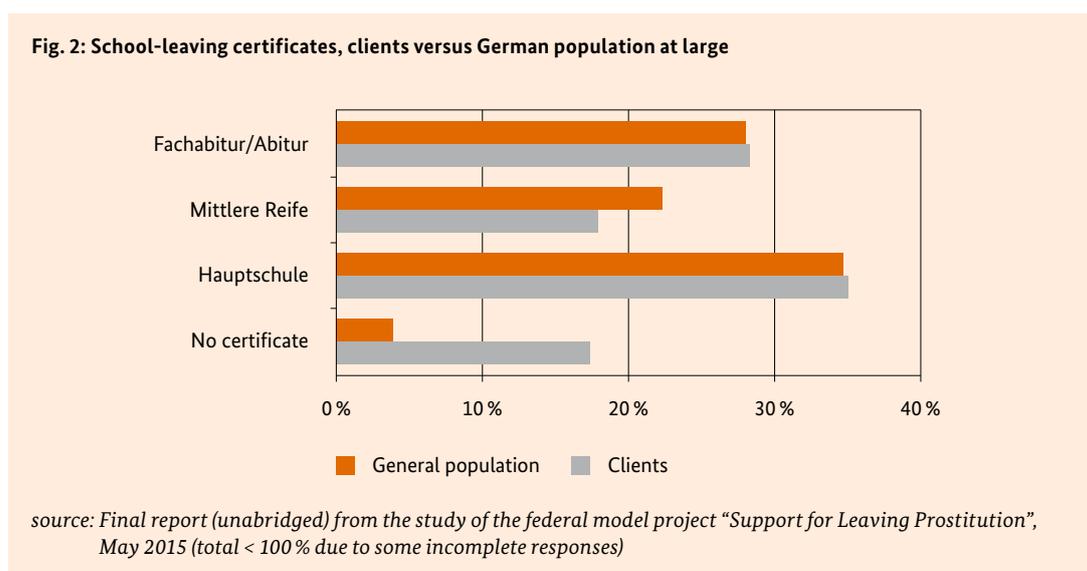
3.2 Target groups reached

At the end of the project, case data had been documented for 256 of the 362 clients (70%). The general characteristics of this group at the start of counseling were as follows:

Most of the clients were female (241), with data from only nine men and four trans persons. They ranged in age from 18 to 59 on first contact with the counseling centers, with an average age of 30 and the 25-34 year group most frequently represented.

Most of the clients did not have partners. More than half had children – predominately minors. Just under 39% had German citizenship. All the other citizenships were distributed primarily among old and new EU countries, with only a few from non-EU countries. Of the clients with non-German citizenship, more than half had arrived in Germany since the latest expansion of the EU (2004 and 2007). Around 27% – mainly non-German citizens – did not have health insurance.

Their educational levels showed a similar distribution to that of the German population at large, with one exception: the percentage of those without a school-leaving certificate was substantially higher, at 17.2% (German population: 3.8%) (Destatis 2015).

Fig. 2: School-leaving certificates, clients versus German population at large

source: Final report (unabridged) from the study of the federal model project "Support for Leaving Prostitution", May 2015 (total < 100% due to some incomplete responses)

Fifteen percent of the documented cases did not have housing at the start of the counseling period. Most of this group lived in brothels, sex work apartments, or hotels which they would have to leave upon leaving prostitution. More than half of these clients at the start of the counseling period had financial resources for only up to six months, or in some cases not at all. Their livelihood came primarily from their current activity (predominately sex work) and social welfare..

3.3 Psychosocial counseling

Stress and stigmatization are key issues in connection with leaving prostitution, and therefore also play a major role in counseling and support. Generally speaking, the sex workers who sought out the federal model project had a great need for assistance. This reflects the content of the program, and is not representative of sex workers in Germany overall.

At the start of counseling, the data show that 60 % of clients were still doing sex work, while nearly 30 % had already left. Nearly 46 % expressed the wish to leave sex work at either the initial or subsequent counseling sessions.[6]

The qualitative interviews with clients reveal their different decisional processes and motivations for seeking support. We identified four patterns.

Clients sought support:
▮ with a wish for career reorientation, but without a concrete wish to leave prostitution
▮ with a clear wish to leave prostitution and concrete ideas about training or a new occupation
▮ to address problematic situations which they could not find a way to leave on their own
▮ for other reasons, and thereby discovered support options they had not anticipated on account of internalized stigma

3.3.1 Counseling: needs and requirements

The case documentation extending over a period of five years covers 256 clients (70 % of clients) for a total of 3,817 counseling sessions. One session often covered multiple topics, for a total of 6,494 topics or an average of nearly two per session. Counseling focused on livelihood as well as psychosocial issues and health. The fourth most common topic was job orientation and training. Approximately 20 % of clients were in contact with the project for one session or short-term, 45 % for up to three months, and 35 % for more than one year. The average length of contact was nearly 12 months. The number of sessions per client averaged 15 but varied from 1 to 246.

Many clients were in such difficult situations that they required comprehensive and time-intensive counseling and support just to ensure subsistence. Only afterwards could additional vocational orientation steps be taken. For all locations of the federal model project, large numbers of clients needing work-intensive social welfare services nearly exhausted the personnel resources for counseling. This also meant there was a certain competition for personnel resources, especially for the social workers. The projects at the respective locations developed different ways of handling this based on their different **framework conditions.**

In places like the Freiburg/Kehl model region, which had **no specialized counseling center** for sex workers to provide individual support, projects that offer specific programs for e. g. leaving prostitution also have to meet the needs of sex workers in general. This was possible in Freiburg/Kehl because the project operator – the Diakonisches Werk – runs an entire series of social welfare facilities that could be networked in uncomplicated ways.

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6   source: case data documentation

A special feature of this rural area is its border region. As the federal model project there (P.I.N.K.) shows, sex work also takes place in a trans-border context. The resources of the relevant municipalities are often not designed to address this. In addition, because of their low population figures, many towns near the border are allowed by German law to ban sex work in general (including Kehl, for example). Here the state and regional governments should provide support to these – usually small – municipalities in planning and running appropriate programs.

If a region already has a **specialized counseling center** for sex workers, such as Nuremberg, that center can clearly distinguish its exit program from its other services. The KASSANDRA center handled social welfare matters and the OPERA model project did everything related to job orientation and qualification. This approach of dividing responsibilities provides adequate services and could be applied to other regions.

Our study identified additional collaborative strategies between exit and other types of counseling (such as for victims of human trafficking). These include: 1) "everything under a single roof" (Café Nachtfalter in Essen); 2) two separate departments at a single facility (Mitternachtsmission in Dortmund); 3) two facilities under the roof of a sponsoring organization (Phoenix in Hannover); and strict separation of the exit program which requires referring some individuals to other projects (Madonna in Bochum).

Despite their different general strategies, the counseling and support services at the three project locations developed in comparable ways to meet needs. For example, some interviewees were afraid they would not be able to integrate into the "other world": *"People are afraid of not being able to switch gears, of not being able to do normal work. There's a fear of going to public agencies. It's just hard if you're used to doing this [sex work]."* For support in entering the "normal world", these interviewees needed people who did not have a disparaging attitude toward sex workers and who could speak sincerely about their situation. *"You can talk openly with them [the project staff members] about everything, no matter what kind of problems you have."*

Most of the project personnel counseled clients with multiple issues (approx. 80 % of those seeking support). A focus was placed on building trust in the counseling relationship. Counselors furthered acceptance by accompanying and supporting clients in their visits to relevant institutions and agencies.

If collaborative structures already existed at the start of the project, as was the case in Berlin and Nuremberg, this made it easier to build general networks for helping clients. In Freiburg these types of networks had to be established from the ground up, although the program structure of the Diakonisches Werk provided a helpful foundation.

Staff members of the model project draw two key conclusions from their actual counseling practice:

> *"The insight that the services absolutely have to be individual, and that ideally they should take place at a counseling center for sex workers. … Because that already signals that everything is OK for you here, and here the women [sex workers] will not face discrimination."*

The rising percentage in recent years of clients with a migration background, from other EU countries or further afield, poses additional obstacles that need to be overcome in counseling and support and especially with regard to government agencies. These obstacles can include discrimination and prejudice, as well as comprehension difficulties due to different cultural backgrounds and social systems. The chance to be accompanied on visits to agencies was especially important for this group of clients.

There is a need for specialization at the projects, particularly for clients with multiple issues and/or migration backgrounds. Project work incorporated the services of other institutions and agencies. Especially in regions with "clear" support structures (Nuremberg, Freiburg/Kehl), this helped to build a network of well-informed individual contacts.

That did not work in Berlin, however, because of the diffuse overall structure of the support services, which generally also operate on the principle of where one lives in the city. Additional interviews with specialists in e. g. Hamburg show that large cities have different needs from those of medium-sized cities and towns. Large cities often have a wide range of very different programs, which require a high degree of coordination to be usable for the target group. Given the size of the sex-work milieu and the size of the general population, specialized counseling centers in these areas are hardly in a position to offer an exhaustive range of services.

3.4 Qualification and training

Another important part of the program at all three locations was to develop and adapt support for job orientation and training. The OPERA (Nuremberg) and DIWA (Berlin) projects offered skill assessment, application assistance, occupational coaching, and occupational training. Overall, 120 of the 174 clients of OPERA and DIWA (68.9 %) made use of an average of three individual/group training offers (439 in total).

Individual client counseling, including vocational orientation plus training and job referrals, proved to be a feasible and efficient approach at all three locations, as shown especially by DIWA's collaboration in Berlin with the Goldnetz training center for women. The group services initially offered (e. g. German, computer courses) were gradually adapted to create flexible, individual programs.

Counseling work at all three locations revealed the very complex interplay among vocational orientation, difficulties in finding and starting a new job, and psychosocial problems. The clients fell into two groups. Those who arrived with clear occupational goals were able to progress through the program and be referred more quickly at all three locations. Those with multiple types of problems required longer and more intensive individual support. As was the case for psychosocial counseling, vocational orientation only led to long-term success if it could build on a relationship of trust.

Projects outside the federal model program largely confirm this approach. For example, those at Nachtfalter in Essen and at Phoenix in Hannover rely on individual job orientation and training programs. Madonna in Bochum and Kober in Dortmund, however, have also been successful with group services.

All of the projects reported that they were de facto the only type of place that addressed the target group of sex workers. They also found it important to be liaisons between clients and other institutions or agencies in sex work- and/or migration-related matters. As for referring clients elsewhere, they regarded this as virtually hopeless, especially for those with multiple types of problems. However, what worked at all locations was cooperation with external training organizations, for example between P.I.N.K. and "Fit for Work" in Offenburg. DIWA also worked together with the LernLäden training centers in Berlin.

In sum: job orientation services for sex workers need to be individually tailored and adapted on a flexible modular basis. The labor market information and skills that clients need for employment referrals, also for referrals to qualification and training programs, should be made available as packages.

3.4.1 Location of job orientation services

Assessments differ on the best place to locate these services. According to some experts, specialized counseling centers for sex workers are the best – or even the only suitable – location for career services. Other experts find that joint efforts with training institutes offer a greater range of possibilities.

Given how heterogeneous the clients are, it is a safe assumption that multiple training and counseling organizations with different job orientation and integration options could meet needs better than a single specialized counseling center for sex workers. Clients' ethnic and cultural backgrounds, ages, educational levels, and job experience are so diverse that services would have to cover the entire spectrum of adult education. A single organization cannot offer everything from German language courses to secondary or general education, professional training and college studies. However, it still remains a challenge to make the services of other organizations available to the target group, because clients' tendency to conceal their connection to sex work for fear of stigmatization generally leads them to avoid contact with such institutions.

3.5 Suitable job market support instruments

We can conclude from the project work and case documentation that job centers[7] play an important role in bridging sex work and the "conventional" world. Once clients cross this bridge, they no longer require special support. Approximately half of sex workers who contacted the project locations depended on job center services to succeed in leaving prostitution. Social security (based on SGB II or SGB III in Germany) therefore lays an important foundation. Job center services were the most frequent counseling topic for 93 clients (36 % of documented cases), recorded more than 700 times. The "activation and referral voucher" (*Aktivierungs- und Vermittlungsgutschein* – AVGS) in section 45 paragraph 1 of SGB III enabled clients to utilize services beyond those of job centers and labor agencies, including career orientation, skill assessment, and coaching. The study team found the AVGS and its individualized approach to support services to be a suitable instrument for the target group.

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7   Job centers (German: "Jobcenter") are government employment agencies.

Both individual and structural obstacles were found to restrict access to job center services. Individual obstacles come primarily from problematic life histories, internalized stigmatization, and other difficulties. Structural obstacles, such as unreasonable or even humiliating treatment at job centers or the rejection of legitimate benefit claims with questionable and stigmatizing justification, continue to be the case, especially at benefit departments of job centers with a high level of employee turnover. The results of this study clearly show that job center employees require a reliable form of cooperation with organizations that specialize in the target group.

The three locations of the federal model project shaped their relations with job centers in different ways:

❙ solution-oriented approach to specific problems and needs of individual clients

❙ regular face-to-face meetings with job center employees and job market equal opportunity officers (*Beauftragte für Chancengleichheit am Arbeitsmarkt* – BCA) to present support strategies and client problems, and to search jointly for solutions; in Berlin these meetings were documented, some in the form of agreements

❙ training sessions for job center employees at which the general problems of these clients were explained

❙ recruitment of individual experts at job centers and labor agencies to serve on project advisory councils

❙ some experts from job centers and labor agencies played an active role on the advisory council for this study of the model project

These multifaceted and intensive joint efforts developed solutions for both individual clients and the target group as a whole. As part of the above-listed forms of working with job centers, the projects at all three of the locations did intensive awareness-raising work in their regions. To overcome the obstacles to leaving a stigmatized field, they developed solution-oriented approaches on three levels.

Level one: ongoing cooperation with job center employees for both individual cases and the target group

When employees of relevant institutions become more aware of the target group, they act in less stigmatizing ways. And when counseling center personnel accompany clients to these places, the sex work background is already known and the question of whether to reveal it or try to live a double life does not arise. The presence of a knowledgeable individual also helps clients at the initial session. This type of cooperation works especially well at job centers that already have specific contacts for the area of prostitution or for the project work.

Level two: general exchange of information on departmental and management levels

In addition to direct contact with individual employees, meetings are held on departmental and management levels that document and specify the types of cooperation. Specific contacts make it easier to apply for social security benefits based on SGB III and SGB II regulations, and can therefore "make a major contribution to success at this location".[8]

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8   P.I.N.K.. (2015) final report, unpublished.

Level three: documented cooperation in the form of agreements

In a large city like Berlin with twelve independent job centers, it is much more difficult for a project of this type to set up reliable collaborative structures. Building on an established agreement for domestic violence in Berlin, special confidentiality agreements have been drawn up in this area too, collaboration with DIWA/Hydra has been specified, and ways of handling special problems worked out. These agreements are monitored and implemented primarily by the equal opportunity officers (BCA) at the agencies. The agreements vary somewhat from district to district, and are expected to be extended beyond the duration of the model project.

3.6 Placement in training and educational programs

One aim of the federal model project was to develop and test qualification and further training services. DIWA in Berlin and OPERA in Nuremberg offered job orientation and training courses which they had developed themselves. P.I.N.K. did not offer its own programs but instead referred clients to external organizations. Along with a psychosocial stabilization process, approximately 60 % of clients[9] undertook job orientation and/or training. Nearly 30 % started a training program or job outside sex work during the project period.

Fig.3: Placement in training/educational programs or work outside prostitution[10]

Project	Training	Education (including college)	Work (including freelance)
DIWA	24 (including 13 in language courses)	13	22
OPERA	59 (including 46 in language courses)	20	25
P.I.N.K.	22	3	21
total	105	36	68

source: Final report (unabridged) from the study of the federal model project "Support for Leaving Prostitution", May 2015

One of the main aims of the model project was to test the possibilities for placement in jobs that can ensure a livelihood. Over the course of the project, 68 of 362 clients started a position with mandatory social benefits, for a placement rate of 19 %. The model project can therefore show a remarkable rate of success. By way of perspective (although these contexts are not directly comparable): the federal insurance fund for salaried employees (BfA) lamented the 13 % overall placement rate of unemployed persons in 2014 by labor agencies and job centers.[11]

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9   Based on the overall number of 362 clients.
10 Source: DIWA, Opera, P.I.N.K.. (2015), final reports, unpublished.
11 See https://www.bundestag.de/presse/hib/2015_03/-/363660; accessed 1 June 2015.

Projects outside of this federal model project have developed other interesting models to support leaving prostitution, which also highlight the relevance of target group-specific programs. The Plan P.[12] and Plan B.[13] projects in Stuttgart and Frankfurt/Main, respectively, form alliances with job centers and other institutions to provide qualification programs, internships, and jobs.

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12 See also http://www.zora-ggmbh.de/plan-p.html; and Plan P (2015) final report 2014, unpublished.

13 http://www.diakonischeswerk-frankfurt.de/rat-hilfe/frauen/zentrum-fuer-frauen/tamara-be-ratung-hilfe-fuer-prostituierte; accessed 1 June 2015.

IV.

"Bridge over troubled water" – what sex workers face, and what helps them leave prostitution

The most important support for leaving prostitution consists of being accompanied from the world of sex work to the other or "conventional" world (*bürgerliche Welt*).[14] The distance between these two worlds can vary. The obstacles lie in sex workers' life histories as well as in their social environments. In the following section we describe the experiences of sex workers who have sought out the project.[15]

4.1 Stigmatization

4.1.1 Dealing with social stigmatization

The interviewees were convinced that most people view prostitution as "reprehensible" or "disgraceful". They stated that prostitutes are "looked down upon", "denigrated" and "condemned" by "normal" or "respectable" people: *"For ordinary people I'm just the dregs"*. Many already feared and anticipated social stigma. They expressed surprise when employees of government agencies, for example, treated them with courtesy and respect.

Other interviewees took on the stigma and were ashamed of their past in prostitution. They had internalized the societal perspective, thereby converting "public stigma" into "self stigma" (Deitz et al. 2015). Subjective correlates of social stigmatization include shame and a lack of self-esteem. A professional attitude toward prostitution can enable some individuals to distance themselves from stigmatization (see below).

When counselors accompanied them to agencies, interviewees were able to reflect on stigma. With counseling, *"things became different over time, and I could also talk about it more easily, and ... I could also take a different attitude toward it"*.

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14 Cf. Petzold's concept of social worlds (2003).

15 To show the significance of stigmatization for sex work and the actual lives of the interviewees, we have included some of their statements below, primarily those pertaining to prostitution, or the combination thereof with migration and/or poverty.

Experience with government agencies

There is no data on how many sex workers avoid contact with government agencies because they fear or have experienced stigmatization. However, statements by interviewees and project staff members suggest that many do not even consider the possibility of contacting agencies because they anticipate stigmatization. In the course of leaving prostitution, some interviewees had to visit a number of agencies, including the tax office, health insurance, residents' registration office, job center, and immigration authorities. Project staff members set up many of these appointments and/or accompanied the interviewees, and agency employees were some of the projects' close cooperation partners or had at least been informed about issues facing the target group. Despite this, some of the interviewees expressly emphasized that they had not expected a positive reception: *"and that is definitely a rare thing, that they [job center employees] helped me."*

Some of the interviewees reported explicitly negative experiences in the semi-public setting of a job center. Within sight and sound of other clients, employees described them as prostitutes. These interviewees could not imagine having to return to those employees. It was preferable to return to sex work. *"Then I'd rather be left to my own devices, and never go back to that person, because I have no words to describe that moment"*. Similar feelings about confrontations of this type were expressed in other interviews: *"extremely embarrassing", "totally unacceptable", "I wanted to throttle him", "tough", "really bad"*. Another interviewee had a similar experience, with additional discrimination as a migrant.

Employers and co-workers in the "new" world

The fear of stigmatization does not end when a job is started outside sex work. The double life led during the time in sex work turns into secrecy and avoidance behavior, both of which serve the purposes of stigma management and information control.

Several interviewees were convinced that they would lose their new jobs if their past became known. Even after leaving sex work, a sense of insecurity remained along with stress in the form of enormous pressure to strictly conceal their previous activity. One interviewee described a strong continuing sense of fear that she would not be able to support herself and that she therefore had not closed the book on sex work:: *"I can't live with this either, that I still have to fear for my livelihood, I've had enough of it"*. She decided to be open about her past, in order not to be vulnerable to someone else revealing it.

One interviewee was placed in a job with a partner organization of the project, and therefore did not have to fear losing it if her past became known. But she too wanted to restrict the number of initiates as much as possible, and therefore made an agreement with her boss that he would treat the information absolutely confidentially.

Even when their colleagues knew nothing about their past and the interviewees were careful not to reveal it, "suspicious circumstances" continued to arise that might expose them. These moments could be unexpected. They were accompanied by a growing realization that the transition from one world to the other required much more change and self-control than previously imagined, and that this would continue to be the case for a long time.

Stigmatization in private contexts

One condition for a satisfied life after leaving sex work is the ability to establish a stable social environment. Here too the stigma of sex work poses an obstacle, with respect to new friends as well as to partners or parents or children. Prostitution is a real taboo vis-à-vis one's children, and self-stigmatization can be especially intense here if sex workers develop feelings of guilt. The example of a migrant who had supported her children back in her home country and then brought them to live with her shows how the shame of having worked in prostitution over-shadows the success of having ensured her family's livelihood over an extended period of time. The stigma played a greater role in her self-esteem than having met her obligations as a mother. Some interviewees maintained the same secrecy to their families of origin as to their partner and children. This too is a fraught situation, because revealing a history of sex work can lead to great personal loss, and can also transfer that stigma to others.

4.1.2 How stigmatization affects exit decisions and processes

Stigma makes it difficult to embark on new paths:
- discrimination and disadvantage arise when past activity in prostitution becomes known. The clients viewed themselves as disadvantaged.
- internalizing devaluation and not expecting help or support lead to a lack of self-confidence and low assessment of one's resources. The clients felt inferior and devalued.
- "rewiring" – becoming (re)acquainted with the rules and forms of communication in the "normal" world. The clients felt disadvantaged and insecure in their interactions with agencies and their new social environment.

The interviewees saw themselves facing two dilemmas:
- dilemma 1: a professional attitude toward prostitution can raise self-confidence and defend against stigmatization, but it requires identifying with the stigmatized activity.
- dilemma 2: the interviewees insisted on being viewed as people instead of being reduced to the status of prostitutes. This can be possible especially if contact extends or a relationship develops. But to do so they have to be open about themselves and risk losing the relationship.
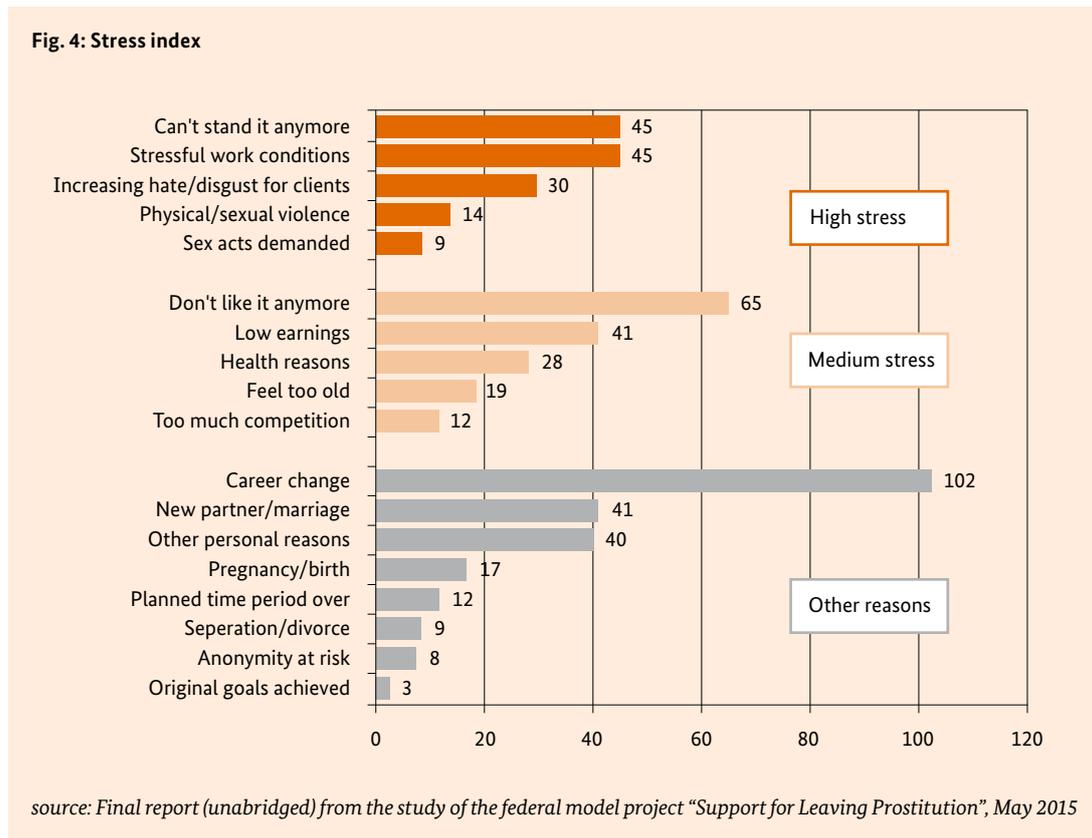
In general, clients' interaction with agencies, employers, colleagues, and new environments is marked by uncertainty regarding the extent to which they can and/or should be open.

4.2 How stress patterns change during the exit process

A large number of clients entered the support programs at a point when they were in poor physical and mental shape and without sufficient resources of their own to make a new start. The many problems facing clients were therefore a major topic at all of the model project locations, and placed corresponding demands on the counseling and support services.
The case data illustrate the extent of these problems. For nearly all the clients, the first priority was to ensure their livelihood. Thirty-nine (18 %, n=213) did not have their own housing; they were living with acquaintances or under sub-let conditions. Thirty-two (15 %) had especially precarious situations: at a brothel/sex work apartment (12), shelter (5), hotel/pension (11) or no

place at all (4). Nearly half (46.7 %; n=256) had no retirement pension; and 54, primarily migrants, (27.1 %, n=199) had no health insurance.

The reasons clients gave for deciding to leave prostitution reflect a wide range of problems. The model below is based on the premise that the more drastic the statement, the greater the level of stress. For example, "can't stand it anymore" is rated at a high level and "don't like it anymore" at a medium level.[16]

Fig. 4: Stress index

source: Final report (unabridged) from the study of the federal model project "Support for Leaving Prostitution", May 2015

Fourteen women had recently experienced physical violence. Shelter accommodation had to be found for nine women who were facing acute threats – in personal or professional contexts. A breakdown by age yields a heterogeneous picture. Stress levels are described as high by young women aged 20 to 24, as lower by those in their 30s, and as higher again by those in their 40s. As of age 50, primarily medium levels are listed. No clear connection can be drawn between the types of stress and the length of time spent in prostitution.

Problems discussed in the interviews

The interviews clearly indicate the types of problems for which solutions were sought in counseling. These problems were by no means linked exclusively to prostitution. While the case documentation yielded information on the types of problems, the qualitative interviews provided biographical context.

16 Individual perceptions of stress can diverge from this of course, and are revealed in the evaluation of the qualitative interviews. Stress index: n=121, multiple answers possible, 90 high level, 102 medium level.

Problem onset in life histories

General health problems were reported in multiple stages of life. We assigned these stages to the following three categories:

❚ before entering prostitution
❚ during prostitution
❚ after leaving prostitution

A range of stressful experiences were reported in **the period before prostitution**, including violence in childhood or adolescence, violent relationships, and family hardships such as the loss of parents or a home. Poverty led to huge concerns about livelihood. Psychological crises or problems such as depression were also reported.

Some of the interviewees described the activities or working conditions **in prostitution** as very stressful. Some also described the work in retrospect as something that *"destroys you"*. This correlates with the length of time involved, interviewee age, and amount of money earned. Older women and men who had spent many years in the field reported lower earnings. But short stints could also lead to exhaustion and depression. Interviewees described special health risks in the form of poor working conditions, violence, and threats by customers or other individuals. They also mentioned the double life that many feel compelled to lead as a source of depression.

Following the decision to leave prostitution and embark upon new pathways, problems could persist and new ones could arise. Illness and depression could escalate upon securing a new livelihood when the daily struggle to survive no longer overshadowed everything else. A lack of earning opportunities, or dependence on welfare benefits lower than previous income, could also trigger a crisis. Looking back, many judged the decision to enter sex work a mistake and suffered from shame and guilt. Typical problems associated with unemployment arose, and the obligatory contact with agencies could bring many instances of discrimination.

An analysis of the stages of life most susceptible to problems revealed different patterns, illustrated by the following examples:

First pattern: most problems before prostitution. Example: in a very difficult situation in her life, one interviewee started sex work alongside a part-time job in the field she had trained for. She had a very open attitude toward prostitution and had previously considered it as an option. After enjoying the work in a wide range of clubs and apartments for a lengthy period, she lost her part-time job and was entirely dependent on her income from prostitution. As of this point she found the work stressful. Upon meeting a new partner, she immediately stopped without entering an exit program.

Second pattern: most problems during prostitution. Example: a young woman of 23 who had not completed an education entered sex work because she urgently needed to pay off debts. She *"somehow slipped into it"*, and could not specify more precisely what had led to it. She viewed the work in negative terms, and stopped doing it in order to take other jobs, but returned upon losing them.

Third pattern: most problems after leaving prostitution. Example: a woman of 50 worked for a long time as her own boss and viewed it as her profession. She later offered standard massage but also some erotic massage. Upon meeting a new partner she wanted to stop sex work. The exit program arranged a job caring for men with dementia, which she initially found extremely stressful psychologically. *"The care work totally wears you down, both physically and mentally, but mainly mentally"*. After a year she had adjusted to her new job: *"I feel good."*

Fourth pattern: problems in all three stages. Example: a 40-year-old migrant from one of the new EU countries entered sex work during a very difficult stage of her life when she urgently needed money. A female friend told her that she could earn more in Germany, which she did at the beginning. She viewed prostitution negatively and found it very stressful, but was afraid to stop and lose her livelihood. She managed to leave with the help of a counseling center. But her situation hardly improved; she was depressed, had humiliating experiences at a job center, and lost her new job.

Fifth pattern: no problems except for the typical ones in finding new work. Example: a 26-year-old woman came to Germany from a new EU country at the age of 18 in order to earn money in sex work. She had left school right before she would have received her school-leaving certificate. Her attitude toward prostitution was open and positive. She described it as her "wild years". She worked very professionally. Upon meeting a new partner and having a child, she stopped. She was in counseling for a long time, had clear employment goals, and was working actively on her education.

Sex workers and ex-sex workers: The search for a new identity

The exit process leads to the decision not to return to sex work, and to establish an income and livelihood as well as new social ties. The exit process must be viewed as a complex mixture of motives and events which leads to this decision – often provisionally at first, then final – and to putting it into practice. Entering prostitution means traveling from the "conventional" world to the world of sex work, and new arrivals often do not realize how far-reaching this decision can be, and that they risk becoming a "discreditable" person (Goffman 1963). When they later start thinking about leaving prostitution, they realize that they have a difficult road ahead of them, even if they are not yet fully aware of the extent of the changes to be made.

When an old identity as a sex worker is discarded, a new one has to be constructed to suit the "conventional" world while at the same time somehow integrating the past. Just like the decision to enter prostitution was not arbitrary and different paths to a goal were considered, the same is true for leaving and available alternatives are examined (except when the need to leave is so urgent that the question of alternatives does not arise). Step by step, the conditions for leaving prostitution change: 1) contacting a counseling center brings information and access to ways of ensuring a livelihood; 2) financial support and a place to live make it possible to think about the next steps; 3) positive experiences with agencies or in social settings build self-confidence whereas negative experiences set the process back. And so on: each next step not only has to be imagined and deemed possible; it also has to be objectively feasible. Motivation needs to turn into the willingness to act, and the willingness to act must turn into successful action. A key component of success lies in a new identity – which in the case of sex work means an "ex-identity" (Fuchs Ebaugh 1989).

For the interviewees who completed the process of leaving prostitution, this often meant a break with their past. They viewed that part of their lives as wrong, unwanted, finished, and as something that must not encroach upon the present. This could be a long process with setbacks, and might still be open at the time of the second interview. Whether or not they leave completely, analysis shows a decisional and developmental process in which a new identity is forged vis-à-vis the past. Sociology of the body as well as psychoanalytic theories offer interesting interpretive and explanatory approaches here.

Many ex-sex workers need a new identity simply because they cannot draw on an earlier one. Many parts of their identity have been altered or damaged either by sex work as such or by the associated stigma. Petzold's five pillars of identity (1993, 2003) provide a theoretical model to explain this process. Together, the five pillars present a systematic picture of an individual's identity. And they balance each other to a certain extent: if the components of one are weakened, strengths in another can compensate and the identity can remain stable. But if too many components of a pillar are weakened or it collapses, identity and mental health are at risk.

Fig. 5: The five pillars of identity according to H. G. Petzold (1993)

(1) Body and body perception	(2) Social networks	(3) Work and accomplishments	(4) Material security	(5) Values and norms
Body Body awareness Health/illness Sexuality **Mind** Intelligence Learning content, skills Creativity **Spirit** Having and expressing feelings	Partnership Family Friends Acquaintances Co-workers Neighbors Organizations Society	House work Raising children School Studies Training and further education Volunteer activities Paid work	Housing Furnishings Finances Clothing Status symbols etc.	Belief systems, religion Life goals and planning Confidence Love Hope Basic values Self-image, self-esteem Self-confidence Resilience

source: http://www.therapiedschungel.ch/content/5_saeulen_der_identitaet.htm; http://www.polipedia.eu/tiki-index.php?page=Psychological+concepts+of+identity

Sex work requires direct physical intimacy, and therefore removes sexuality from the private sphere. This necessarily weakens the first pillar for anyone who rejects or least disparages sex work. The stability of the second pillar is weakened especially by stigma. Isolation and mutual antagonism of these two pillars make it hard for sex workers to develop or keep the social contacts and relationships in the "conventional" world that open up to them upon leaving. The third and fourth columns are of crucial significance: a good income can compensate for social rejection of this activity which is not considered work. An insufficient (or no longer sufficient) level to meet material and psychological needs often serves as an impetus to leave. If leaving means subsisting on low welfare payments and losing one's home, etc., this can be experienced as a crisis. Some sex workers who view the activity as undesired can keep the fifth pillar stable by doing it for their children or family, remaining within their value systems despite self-stigmatization. Their self-esteem can suffer greatly, however, if they lack the strength to shield themselves from constant disparagement and devaluation. Exit support programs for sex workers have to address these risks to psychological health and promote the corresponding strengths.

Very different ways and degrees of mastering the demands and problems of prostitution were described in the interviews. These included: 1) viewing the activity in matter-of-fact terms as gainful employment; 2) overcoming initial shock and becoming accustomed to the work; 3) feeling unable to cope or undergoing an acute crisis with suicidal tendencies. Attitudes toward prostitution also did not remain constant for each individual; they could change as a result of concrete events and/or reactions from other persons.
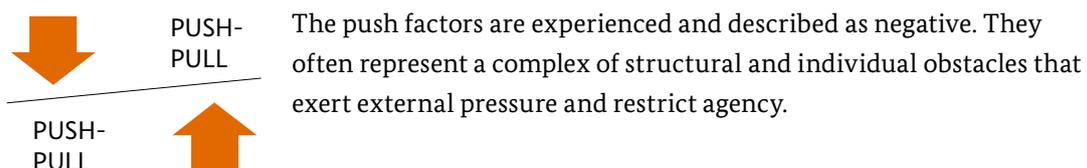
For those who never really wanted it or who continue to find it stressful, work in prostitution can have pronounced psychosomatic effects. Interviewees spoke of disgust, intolerability, and hopelessness. In the absence of alternatives that are both realistic and viewed as such, they had to cope with it. The cognitive dissonance that arises when a person feels forced to do or endure something they see as intolerable can be eased (in some cases) by trying to lessen the sense of intolerability. This coping mechanism protects psychological stability by shifting these feelings into latency and thus into the background.

It became clear that the most important conditions for leaving prostitution consist of a reduction in social stigmatization combined with successful social inclusion. By contrast, a particularly destructive effect on (ex-)sex workers' health and their prospects for transition consists of internalizing social stigmatization to create self-stigmatization.

4.3 Push and pull factors in leaving prostitution

International literature and studies show that the interaction of push and pull factors is key both to entering prostitution (Dodsworth 2012; Mayhew and Mossman 2007) and to the decisional process and management of leaving it. While some authors use the terms "resilience" and "risk factors" (Dodsworth 2012), others use "push" and "pull" explicitly (Bindel at al. 2012). The strength of these factors affects sex workers' agency and vulnerability (Dodsworth, ibid.) in different stages of their lives and work, and also influences the success of their decision to leave.

To gain deeper insights into decisional structures and to better understand sex workers' views of their own resources, leeway, and opportunity for change, we have analyzed and expanded this push/pull model. Qualitative data from client interviews amply indicate that push and pull factors are found on both sides of the decisional scale – whether to remain in sex work or whether to leave it. This yields four interrelated subjective force fields whose relative strengths can influence or even determine the process of leaving:

PUSH-PULL

PUSH-PULL

The push factors are experienced and described as negative. They often represent a complex of structural and individual obstacles that exert external pressure and restrict agency.

The pull factors are experienced and described as positive. They represent external impetus and attraction, and also internal impetus, resolution, and readiness for change.

These factors often display a multifaceted dynamic of mutual reinforcement or opposition. Understanding how enmeshed these push and pull factors can be helps in understanding why the process of leaving prostitution is not easy to manage (Mayhew and Mossman 2007). This also helps to show that the obstacles to change/transition do not consist solely of negative push factors. Often the positively perceived pull factors ("incentives", Mayhew and Mossman 2007) play an inhibiting role (Bindel et al. 2012). If so, a desired process of change can take longer and be marked by fluctuation, indecision, or even stagnation.[17] By the same token, negative experiences (push factors) can mark a turning point in the decisional process and even provide a crucial impetus to leave.

The following table shows potential major motivations and factors in the decision to leave sex work. Clients and interviewees described them as relevant, and subsequent analysis identified them as key obstacles or resources for the decision to exit and/or embark on new pathways.

Fig. 6: Push and pull factors

PUSH → Factors that push or pull people into sex work, keep them there, or send them back ← PULL	
▌ Poverty, financial hardship/crisis ▌ Debt ▌ Homelessness, housing problems ▌ Stress, violence, trauma ▌ Drugs ▌ Low educational/training levels and/or job experience ▌ Low agency; hopelessness ▌ Experience or anticipation of stigmatization ▌ Loss of social network (family, friends) ▌ Difficulties dealing with past ▌ Problems with identity as sex worker	▌ Self-realization, independence ▌ High degree of flexibility and freedom ▌ Good earning potential ▌ Rapid feedback and immediate payment ▌ Experience of support and solidarity in sex work milieu ▌ Sense of adventure, enthusiasm, power ▌ Hedonism, appetite, intoxication ("wild years")
← PUSH Factors that push or pull people out of sex work PULL →	
▌ Turning points: trauma, violence ▌ Stress, depression ▌ Physical and mental exhaustion ▌ Decline in quality of working conditions ▌ Low earnings, debt ▌ Stigmatization, disgust, shame, guilt ▌ Double life	▌ Self-realization/objective attained ▌ Stable positive self-image and self-confidence, agency ▌ Wish/yearning for a new identity, to feel "whole" again ▌ Turning points: Resolve to leave ▌ Readiness to integrate sex work period into one's biography ▌ Fortunate coincidences and positive life events: partner, love, pregnancy, child

source: Final report (unabridged) from the study of the federal model project "Support for Leaving Prostitution", May 2015

4.3.1 Leaving sex work: Reasons and obstacles

The many different motivations and obstacles to leaving prostitution and taking up a new occupation are revealed in the case documentation. Because the federal model project was designed to help people leave prostitution, it was expected that the clients would be highly motivated to do so. The most common motivation given was the desire for a new occupation

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17 The exit process can be "on hold" if an interviewee makes no progress in decisions or actions over a prolonged period of time.

(102 clients), followed by a large number of others having mainly to do with prostitution-related stress as well as lack of job training and experience (82 clients, 163 answers, multiple answers possible).

The evaluation of the qualitative data sought to determine whether there are additional obstacles to leaving prostitution or strong arguments for remaining in it which are anchored in sex work or its milieu, above and beyond the reasons given at the start of the counseling process (Leopold and Steffan 1997). What combinations of push and pull factors can be seen, and what dynamics are thereby generated in the decisional process? Fourteen different patterns were identified, of which four are described in the sections below.

4.3.2 Factors that encourage remaining in sex work (long-term)

What pulls people in, keeps them there, or pushes them back?

Pull factor: The appeal of the milieu ("a sense of family")

This interviewee found an appealing, family-like atmosphere which was very important to her: *"Fun with friends, discos, good money – the atmosphere (in sex work) was just great all the time, we were like a small family."* She had to spend half a year "talking myself into" leaving. And she only succeeded after being offered a different job at the brothel, which enabled her to remain for a while without having to provide sexual services directly anymore: *"I was simply afraid to leave that place."* A close-knit quality specific to this milieu and a feeling of belonging generated a positive attraction here, which was all the more important to this interviewee the smaller the overlap there seemed to be between the worlds of "prostitution" and "conventional life".

Multiple push factors: The exit hurdles are too high ("I'm stuck in a vicious circle")

Income was a major issue in considering whether to leave sex work, especially but not only for migrants. These interviewees saw the work as the only way to earn a living – very often for their families as well. This interviewee had a sense of limited opportunities and hopelessness after her first attempt to leave sex work. She had come from another EU country and worked in Germany for eight years. Multiple structural and individual push factors intensified to pose insurmountable barriers; for example, she lived at the brothel and could not find her own apartment. Because she could not show "proper" residence documents, she had not yet been able to register at a job center and also did not have health insurance in Germany.

Despite this she attempted to make a living outside sex work with a low-paying job in the profession she had originally trained for. But she was "outed" as a sex worker, and lost the job as a consequence. Her family was also informed anonymously, and withdrew their support. Mounting health problems made it difficult to pursue her original profession, which was physically demanding. Her situation worsened in the year between the two interviews, although she was constantly initiating action and seeking other ways to earn money. *"I said it's a vicious circle. First of course with a place to live, and then the work. And if I don't get an apartment then of course I can't get work, which like I said is a vicious circle."*

4.3.3 Factors that encourage leaving sex work

What pulls people out? What pushes them out?
This section examines the interplay of push and pull factors that draws or compels people out of sex work. Some interviewees describe lengthy decisional processes, whereas others mention negative turning points or favorable combinations of events and biographical turning points. Others describe self-confidence and belief in their own agency as an important impetus.

Push factors: Poor working conditions and hazards

Worsening working conditions raise stress levels on the one hand, but can also be a factor for leaving sex work. For many interviewees, the problems they had experienced before entering prostitution were exacerbated by a decline in working conditions. Financial crises loomed larger as earnings decreased and debts accumulated. Numerous interviewees were stuck in sex work for extended periods and had to make multiple attempts before managing to leave. One described the cost-benefit ratio as not (or no longer) acceptable: *"I wasn't earning enough with this job, not even the minimum to survive (...) my health and peace of mind [suffered], all these things came together."* Another interviewee also described a lack of income as a reason to leave: *"I try to get a minimum of twenty euros, but I've recently been coming home with nothing, really nothing; I can't keep doing this. ... No customers the whole day... I write down how much money I earn every day, and some weeks it was zero, zero, zero, zero...."* For another interviewee, danger-ous situations played a key part in her decision to leave: *"It was awful for me, and then I almost couldn't take it anymore, also because a lot was happening with me – with customers and cars – and sometimes I thought I'd never get out, health-wise, yeah, a few times I was also nearly – it's really dangerous."*

Pull factors: Self-confidence, agency, optimism

Individual skills and strengths were important support factors as well as motive forces in handling the different problems that arise in the course of leaving prostitution and embarking on new paths. These include the ability to develop an open and confident view of the future, social and communication skills, clear job goals, and a realistic view of one's resources and weaknesses. One interviewee, for example, described her future prospects with confidence: *"You have to look forward, not back, because our future is in front of us, not behind us. You have to look ahead."* Another showed her belief in her agency as follows: *"It's going to work because I want it to. I'm going to school now and you know how it works: just keep moving ahead and everything will work out."* Yet another interviewee analyzed her counseling process and noted how important it was in helping her identify her strengths: *"It's a very important thing to be self-confident. I have my own strengths. She [the counselor] showed me where my skills lie, and without that I wasn't able to see myself, or find myself, so to speak. Yes, to achieve a goal, to get there, not just wanting to but really pulling through to the end."*

In taking the steps to change their lives, clients' readiness and actual abilities to act were cru-cial. A resolute approach to their own abilities to act promoted independence, control and responsibility for their new course. Support programs like skill assessments and coaching opened new avenues for their self-image and self-esteem.

For several of the clients, successful steps taken in the year between the first and second interviews confirmed their course and spurred them on in the process of leaving prostitution. Belief that they themselves are capable of change was a major resource that played a key role. *"I thought I wasn't capable of anything because this was the only type of work I had done, but no, there are an awful lot of things that you can see as your skills or strengths. She [the instructor] taught me to believe in myself more."* An absence or limited degree of this resource had an enduring negative effect on agency, and was a push factor back into sex work. The clients first needed to restore their self-confidence and strengthen their self-esteem before they could dare to take the next steps of changing their personal and professional lives.

V.
Results and conclusions

The federal model project demonstrates that a good number of sex workers require specific counseling and support to leave prostitution.

These needs can differ widely, from information alone to long-term, comprehensive support for social, health, and employment issues. The need is especially high for individuals in critical situations, with major social and health problems, and/or without basic qualifications (education or occupational training). The need is also especially high for migrants.

Two important conditions for overcoming individual and societal obstacles to leaving prostitution are: 1) reducing social stigmatization; and 2) striving for social inclusion.

The results of this study on the federal model project clearly show that sex workers face stigmatization and exclusion. Stigmatization means that prostitution is viewed as its own world, separated from the "normal" or "conventional" world. Moving to the other world is difficult, and often brings new problems. Exclusion, disparagement, and loss of their new jobs make (ex-) sex workers afraid to reveal their past. Stigmatization raises both individual and structural barriers, which impede access, understanding, and acceptance.

Different push and pull factors can impede and prolong the process of leaving prostitution. A considerable number of clients entered the model project's support programs in poor mental or physical condition and without the personal resources needed to make a new start.

Experience from the three model project regions demonstrates that at least one in ten of all sex workers requires counseling and support to leave prostitution. Specialized counseling centers should have enough personnel for the estimated size of the sex work milieu in their respective regions.

Regional and local conditions, the structure of the sex work milieu, and the existing counseling programs all need to be analyzed in order to provide need-oriented support programs for leaving prostitution.

Support for leaving prostitution is only effective in conjunction with basic legal, health, and psychosocial counseling. This should therefore be part of the programs at specialized counseling centers.

Analysis of the three project locations shows that a structurally feasible and efficient approach is the following: prostitution-specific counseling centers offer a basic program supplemented by additional programs such as exit counseling and occupational training. This approach is also transferable to other locations.

Psychosocial counseling needs to determine the individual need for support, and function in a client-centered way such that clients can make use of subsequent job orientation and training programs. This support needs to overcome structural barriers to new occupations – but it also needs to identify and strengthen clients' personal resources and promote additional social and life skills. These conclusions were reached by both the staff members of the counseling centers and the members of this evaluation and research group (*wissenschaftliche Begleitung*). Strengthening clients' resources is what lays the foundation for personal and professional development.

The goal of these counseling programs is to promote equal opportunities and social integration for sex workers, male as well as female. Prostitution-specific counseling centers are needed for exit programs to work.

The people in sex work are very heterogeneous: they enter it for different reasons, have different experiences in it, and have a similarly wide range of motivations for leaving it.

The model project showed in impressive form how bridges can be built between the two worlds by means of individual client support on the one hand and trust-based collaboration with training institutes and job centers on the other.

For support programs to be successful, they have to work together with government agencies and institutions which should be actively developing new opportunities for sex workers. Regional and/or local networking of all involved creates favorable conditions for conveying specific knowledge about the target group to these institutions. The social world of prostitution does not overlap with that of other occupations. Overcoming avoidance on the part of clients as well as prejudice on the part of agency employees and municipal decision-makers considerably increases the efficiency of support processes. Regional and municipal networks are very important, both for individual cases and for improving the support system in general.

The hurdles to job training and placement for the target group can be overcome by building long-term collaborative structures with the relevant institutions. However, overcoming these hurdles is an ongoing task.

A comparison of outreach work for exit programs in the different project locations shows that some members of the target group find their own new job opportunities while others are very difficult to reach. Of particular note are migrants from EU countries, also from other countries, and especially those in unclear legal or exploitative situations. There is hardly any way to

reach these individuals, with the exception of certain limited health agency programs to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Prostitution-specific counseling centers should be able to offer personal and career development programs for this group as well.

> Programs should address sex workers' actual situations and also be open to those not eligible for government support.

VI.
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