

An abstract painting featuring a large, stylized eye in the lower right quadrant. The eye has a white sclera, a green iris, and a black pupil. It is surrounded by vibrant, swirling colors of purple, blue, and green. To the left of the eye, there are bold, black outlines of what appear to be human figures or shapes in red, orange, and purple. The background is a mix of these colors with some splatters and vertical black lines.

# Nadheim

Selling and exchanging sexual services online in Norway: Exploring and describing the different arenas, those involved and their potential needs and challenges.

Report written by Laura Treacy,  
November 2017.



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**With thanks to:** all who contributed to the mapping stage of this project, especially those who shared their experiences and knowledge regarding the selling and exchanging of sexual services online.

# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## 1.1 SELLING AND EXCHANGING SEXUAL SERVICES ONLINE IN NORWAY – MAPPING REPORT

Selling and buying sexual services in Norway has previously been associated with prostitution on the streets. However, the emergence of the internet and smart-telephones as central communication channels and market-places in our society has meant that the selling and exchanging of sexual services has increasingly occurred online. The internet is an arena that can facilitate easy marketing towards customers, with diverse services being more easily accessible for buyers via a variety of online platforms. For those selling, the internet can often allow greater control and flexibility over which services they provide and when. In addition, the internet can afford a much greater degree of anonymity and discretion for both parties during the initial contact phase (Cunningham & Kendall 2009, Larsdotter et al. 2011, Olssen 2010). This anonymity also means that it is easier for those selling or exchanging sexual services to conceal their activities from the outside world, be it friends, family or support organisations.

Nadheim, run by SKBO<sup>1</sup>, is the country's oldest support centre within the field of prostitution, offering low-threshold services for men, women and transgender individuals with experience in selling sexual services. Outreach, individual support and advocacy work have been the main three areas of Nadheim's focus over the years. Since 2009 Nadheim has conducted outreach work on the internet. During this time we have gained much experience and understanding around how sexual services are sold via the internet in Norway. This experience has, however, often been anecdotal in character, and has not been documented in a systematic enough way. Development of the internet and online arenas where sexual services can be sold or exchanged has occurred rapidly, and thus the few reports and studies that have been made in this area are in many ways now outdated (e.g. Johansson & Turesson 2006, MacPhail et al. 2015, Tveit og Skilbrei 2008, Waage 2010).

Nadheim has specifically seen there is limited knowledge about potential new groups who are selling or exchanging sexual services online, such as young people, men, transgender individuals and transmigrants<sup>2</sup>. We lack knowledge regarding who they are, their needs and what challenges they face, specifically related to selling or exchanging sexual services via the internet rather than more traditional arenas such as on the street. In addition, we do not know if our current methods for outreach online are optimal, if

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<sup>1</sup> Stiftelsen Kirkens Bymisjon Oslo (SKBO) – Church City Mission

<sup>2</sup> Migrants who regularly travel between different areas or countries, usually for work.

they should be modified or new approaches developed. Therefore, in 2016 Nadheim started a 3-year project titled: “selling and exchanging sexual services online – new groups and arenas”<sup>3</sup> funded by ExtraStifelsen. Since this project has started two reports from Pro Sentret on young people who exchange sex as capital, and the selling of sexual services online in Norway, have concluded that more knowledge is still needed in these areas (Bjørndahl 2017, Kock 2017).

The two main objectives for the “selling and exchanging sexual services online” project are: to map and increase our knowledge of the different internet-arenas where sexual services are sold and exchanged; and through this increased knowledge improve the services we provide for people who sell or exchange sexual services online (see appendix I for all of the projects objectives and specific objectives).

The mapping activities described in this report have been conducted as part of this larger project which will be completed at the end of 2018. The main aims for the mapping stage of the project were to: explore and describe online arenas where sexual services are sold or exchanged; which groups are present on the different arenas; and to understand these groups own needs and challenges relating to selling or exchanging sexual services online. The findings relating to this part of the mapping stage are documented in this current report and will be shared with other relevant actors in the field e.g. Sex og Samfunn, Albertine, Pro Sentret.

## 1.2 DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGIES USED IN THIS REPORT

The change from street-based prostitution to selling sexual services via the internet has also gone hand in hand with challenging how our society traditionally demarcates prostitution from other sexual relations. It is beyond the scope of this mapping report to delve deeply into this discourse of how individual people and society as a whole define and understand prostitution and other transactional sexual encounters today. However, it is important that we are clear in our communication regarding certain concepts and terminology that we will use within this report.

### 1. *Selling and exchanging sexual services online*

Selling sexual services online means that the initial contact or communication between buyer and seller occurs via the internet, for example via an escort website or a dating app. The different sexual services sold usually involve a physical meeting but not always. For example, this can include showing your body or being watched whilst masturbating via a web-cam. We use the term “selling or exchanging” since

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<sup>3</sup> “seksalg på nett – nye grupper og arenaer”

the transaction does not always involve money, but may involve the exchange of sexual services for other resources, such as a place to sleep, payment of tuition fees, a gift or a holiday.

## *2. The different online arenas on the internet*

The selling and exchanging of sexual services online occur on many different arenas or platforms on the internet. Therefore, we do not view the internet as a single entity or arena within this report, but explore and describe the various arenas within the internet where transactional sex can occur.

## *3. Grey Zone*

When we refer to the “grey zone” of selling or exchanging sexual services within this report we are referring to either:

- A. “The explicit selling or exchanging of sexual services for money or other resources within grey zone arenas”. Grey zone arenas are websites or apps that are not intentionally designed for, or explicitly aimed at, the exchange of sexual services for money. For example, social media sites, online chat forums and dating websites/apps would be considered grey zone arenas.
- B. “The exchange of sexual services for resources in a way that is not always perceived as, or considered to be, prostitution”. For example, sugar dating where a holiday may be exchanged for sexual services.

# METHODS

## 2.1 OVERVIEW AND LIMITATIONS OF THE METHODS WE USED DURING THIS EXPLORATION AND MAPPING STAGE

Selling and exchanging sexual services online is a complex and dynamic process, which can be difficult to navigate and understand as an outsider or observer. We purposively chose a number of different methods as part of our mapping phase in order to gain as broad, thorough and accurate understanding as possible of the current situation.

The different methods we used were:

- 1) **Mapping of the different online arenas**
- 2) **Semi-structured interviews with key persons who have experience selling or exchanging sexual services online**
- 3) **Semi-structured interviews with social workers from Nadheim**
- 4) **Outreach on the internet – Systematic review of field reports and summaries**
- 5) **Collaboration and communication with other relevant actors**

Each method had its own limitations and/or challenges. For example, mapping of the different online arenas relied on predominantly passive and observatory techniques. Knowing *who* is using different sites or apps can be difficult as many people do not provide information about themselves (e.g. age, nationality) and some use fake profiles. Understanding the details of how transactional exchanges were agreed upon and actually took place could not be gained through this passive mapping strategy alone.

The combination of different methods meant that we were better able to complement or fill in the holes when these methodological challenges or limitations arose. For example, information gained through mapping the different online arenas was supplemented by communication with other relevant actors and interviews with key persons – confirming the most popular and relevant net pages and apps, adding those we hadn't heard of, as well as providing more detailed information into how transactions between buyers and sellers occur.

In addition to the methods described above we have continuously reviewed relevant literature regarding the selling or exchanging of sexual services online, with a special focus on the Scandinavian area.

## 2.2 SPECIFIC CHALLENGES WITH MAPPING THE GREY ZONE OF SELLING OR EXCHANGING SEXUAL SERVICES ONLINE

During the planning stage of the “selling and exchanging sexual services online” project we had hoped to connect ourselves to key persons who used grey zone arenas to explicitly sell or exchange sexual services online, or with key persons who exchanged sexual services online for resources other than money. However, this strategy proved difficult as we were unable to connect with any potential key persons who exchanged sexual services for resources other than money via grey zone arenas. This may be because they did not perceive or associate their activities with prostitution, and thereby may have been reluctant to engage in dialogue with Nadheim, which is a support centre that is directly associated with prostitution. The key persons we did connect with nearly exclusively used escort sites rather than “grey zone arenas” such as sugar dating apps as they were deemed too energy and time-consuming, and were often associated with higher levels of risk-taking. Due to these challenges the majority of our findings regarding the grey zone arenas and those who operate within the grey zone arenas is predominantly based upon passive mapping of these different websites and apps, the field reports from the Outreach-work online, as well as communication with other relevant actors in the field.

## 2.3 ETHICS

Some of the arenas we mapped included websites or apps that were not part of the traditional escort arena or fell within the grey zone arenas. With this in mind, it was deemed important not to assume that all arenas actually included the exchange or selling of sexual services, or that all of those who used them were actively involved in selling or exchanging sexual services. We believed that it was important to be clear from the beginning with who we were, so that no one would make contact, mistaking us for an individual person not an organization. When we conducted our systematic mapping of the different arenas, we adjusted our approach according to the requirements or demands of the various websites/apps. Some sites did not require a log in or profile, and we were therefore able to actively explore and map these. Others required a profile in order to access them, and we therefore created a Nadheim profile detailing who we were and why we were on the website/app. If we were unable to create a “Nadheim” profile we created anonymous profiles which enabled us to passively explore how the site or app operated, and how likely it was that some users sold or exchanged sexual services for money or other commodities via the website or app. When using our anonymous profiles we did not actively interact or communicate with other users so as not to mislead anyone.

We were also aware of the potential vulnerability specifically for the key persons who participated in the semi-structured interviews. Selling and exchanging of sexual services is regularly seen as a taboo topic with stigma often being attached to those involved. The project's goals will of course never be more important than the well-being of our service-users. Thereby it was important for us to maintain confidentiality of those we spoke to, and be very clear that they were to only share information with us that they wanted to. We also gave each participant opportunities to change their mind about participating, reassured them that they could withdraw their participation at any time, or choose to not answer specific questions, without giving a reason and without having any impact upon their relationship with Nadheim. Furthermore, all of the participants were given the opportunity to read through the transcript of their individual interview – thereby being able to change any misunderstandings or delete sections that they did not want included in the analysis process. Only one participant asked to read through their interview transcript and they did not request any revisions. All notes from the interviews were deleted after this process and the transcribed interviews were stored on a secure database, to be deleted when the final project is completed.

## 2.4 MAPPING OF THE DIFFERENT ONLINE ARENAS

Between January and August 2016 active searches and reviews of different types of online arenas were conducted. These searches were informed by the experience gained through Nadheim's ongoing outreach-work online, informal conversations with key persons as well as participation in different online chat forums which explored members experiences and opinions of various arenas, websites and apps. Furthermore, reports, articles and documentaries within the general media regarding selling or exchanging sexual services online were actively monitored.

Between October 2016 and February 2017 systematic exploration and mapping of the most relevant and widely used websites and apps, as determined from the initial mapping phase, was conducted. Searches for new or emerging websites and apps were regularly conducted throughout this period. A template was used to guide the systematic mapping (see appendix II), which included various topics such as: descriptions of who was using the website or app; how contact and transactions between the buyer and seller occurred; who operated the website or app; and development of contact with Nadheim, if relevant.

The main websites and apps we mapped included (note this list is not exhaustive):

PlanetRomeo.com	escort-norway.com	Meetasugarbaby.com
RentMen.eu	norwayescortzone.com	Sugardaddyoslo.com
RealEscort.eu	noway.escortnews.com	Gaysir.no
Escort-date.eu	Sugardaters.no	Eros.no
Hotesort.no	Datesugarbabies.com	Noresk.com



Nakenprat.com	Scruff.com	Badults.no
Escupido.com	Tinder.com	Be2.no
MaxErotica.com	Tumblr.com	Fristemeg.no
Badoo.com	Twitter.com	Zooste.com
C-date.no	Grindr.com	Hemmeligekontakter.com
Daddyhunt.com	Sinful-moments.com	Flirtfair.no
Guyz	Moteplassen.eu	Qruiser.com
HappyEnd	Knallsiden.com	escorte-forums
Instagram.com	Rampetepiker.no	forums-free.com

In addition: various individual home pages, pornography sites and blogs were included and explored.

## 2.5 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH KEY PERSONS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCE SELLING OR EXCHANGING SEXUAL SERVICES ONLINE

Between March and August 2017 we conducted 10 semi-structured interviews with different individuals (key persons) who have or have had experience of selling or exchanging sexual services via the internet in Norway. Each interview lasted between 1-3 hours and took place at Nadheim in a private and quiet room, at a time that was convenient for the participant. One person conducted the interview, whilst another wrote notes. We purposively chose not to use an audio-recorder. The interviews were conducted in Norwegian or English depending upon the participants preference. Due to time and resource-constraints we were not able to conduct interviews in other languages. The participants were not paid for their time, however, refreshments were provided during the interviews. A conversation-guide was used (please see appendix III) with themes including: knowledge of different websites/apps, security strategies, separating private and work life, and contact with Nadheim or other services.

Some participants were active service users of Nadheim, others were contacted through Nadheim's Outreach-work online, whilst others had been to Nadheim to collect condoms. Each person was asked to participate in an interview as it was felt that they could offer interesting, useful and pertinent insight into the selling and/or exchanging of sexual services online in Norway. We only included those who had a good command of either Norwegian or English, and we did not include or approach anyone who was under 18 years of age as Nadheim only provides services for those over 18 years of age.

All of the potential key persons we approached about participating in a semi-structured interview agreed to participate. Many of the participants who spoke with us described afterwards that the interview had been a positive experience and they were happy to be assisting Nadheim in improving the services that we offer. For some it was also an

opportunity to discuss and share a side of their life that they cannot always discuss so openly with friends or family. All stated that they were happy to be contacted by Nadheim again in the future regarding our project.

To ensure confidentiality this report will not describe the individual participants in detail but give a brief description of the group. In total we interviewed 6 women, 2 transgender women and 2 men, aged between mid-20s up to mid-40s. The participants were from a variety of countries and regions including Norway, Russia, Ukraine, South America, Africa, Southern Europe. They had various residency statuses and thus varying rights to healthcare, welfare, access to work etc. Some lived in Norway permanently, others temporarily, whilst others only for short periods, travelling in and out of the country. Some lived only in Oslo, whilst others travelled around Norway. Some earned money solely through selling sexual services, others had other income-generating activities, whilst others no longer sold sex. Some had sold sex for many years, whilst others for only a few months. All had recent experience (within the last year) or were currently selling or exchanging sexual services online.

After each interview was transcribed, the project team<sup>4</sup> read through each interview together. This enabled any misunderstandings to be discussed within the team, and provided an opportunity for discussions around how to improve the interview technique. In addition, new themes were identified and the conversation-guide adjusted or altered to include these new topics.

## **2.6 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH SOCIAL WORKERS FROM NADHEIM**

In-depth interviews were conducted with 5 social workers based at Nadheim who have experience working with people who sell or exchange sexual services online in Norway. The interviews took place between October 2016 and January 2017, with each interview lasting between 1 -2 hours. The interviews were audio-recorded, and conducted and transcribed by a member of SKBO development department. The main themes discussed were: experience with different online arenas; who they meet via the different arenas; changes in groups over time; needs or challenges highlighted.

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<sup>4</sup> The project team within this interview-phase consisted of three members of Nadheim's staff, and one member of SKBOs Development department

## 2.7 OUTREACH ON THE INTERNET – SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF FIELD REPORTS AND SUMMARIES

Nadheim has conducted Outreach-work Online since 2009. This occurs 1-2 times per week, usually in the late afternoon and evening. During these sessions members of the Nadheim team log on to the various escort websites, and either send a message or ring different profiles or adverts. A brief description is provided, explaining who is ringing and why, what services Nadheim offer, and where Nadheim is located. An SMS or WhatsApp message is usually sent before or after a phone call, clarifying who was ringing and their contact information. Mapping, establishing contact and providing harm-reduction information are the three main aims for this outreach work. The team regularly look for new websites or apps, and explore them to see if they are a relevant platform for the outreach work.

Some conversations are very long, others very short, and many do not answer their phones – all for various reasons. The language-skills available within the Outreach-online team are English, Norwegian, Spanish and Thai. There has also been a Russian-speaking volunteer at some points during the mapping phase. During or after these Outreach evenings some of the people who have been contacted come into Nadheim either to pick up condoms and lubricant, others have questions around topics such as customers, health, migration, Norwegian laws or the police.

After each Outreach evening a field-report is written detailing who the team came in contact with (including gender and nationality if known) and via which website/app, what conversations or themes were discussed and plans for further follow-up if needed. In addition, the team discusses how they could improve their individual “Outreach” techniques, what is done well as a team and how the process could be improved.

As part of the mapping for this project a summary of the field reports was made. Each field report from January 2016 through to March 2017 was re-read by a member of the project team. Nadheim came in contact with 408 people through their outreach work during this time. A summary was written from these field reports with a focus on: description of the different arenas; Is anything changing? Who do we meet and where? Explicit needs from those we are in contact with; Our reflections on the conversations and implicit needs identified. In addition, prerequisites for successful outreach methods were identified in order to improve future outreach sessions and methodologies used.

## 2.8 COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION WITH OTHER RELEVANT ACTORS

We have been in contact with a number of relevant organisations, groups and individuals. These communications have provided an opportunity to inform them about Nadheim, our current services and how we hope to work in the future, as well as make our “selling or exchanging sexual services online” project known within the various professional environments. Collaboration with these relevant actors have assisted in the planning and development of our project, as well as during this mapping stage where we have learnt about their different experiences and knowledge regarding selling and exchanging sexual services online.

To date we have been in contact with or met the following people or organisations: Albertine, Sex og Samfunn, Pro Sentret, Olafiakilikken, PION, Anne Grytbakk, Arne Krokan, KRIPOS, Grünerløkka helsestasjon, FRI, Skeiv Ungdom, Uteseksjon, Pegasus, Anette Brunovskis, PRO Tukipiste, Helseutvalget, MSO, Jim Høyen – Gaysir, Voldtekstmottaket på legevakten på Oslo, 1000 muligheter, Mikamottagningen Goteborg, Mikamottagningen Stockholm (please see appendix IV for more detailed information).



## FINDINGS

The information and knowledge gathered through all of the different mapping activities discussed above have been combined together to form these findings. Some of the findings will not be discussed in detail within this report, but will be used internally within Nadheim. For example for service development purposes such as improving our methods and tools for our outreach-work online.

### 3.1 OVERVIEW AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DIFFERENT ARENAS WHERE SEXUAL SERVICES ARE SOLD OR EXCHANGED ONLINE IN NORWAY

This section will give an overview of the different arenas and describe the most relevant websites or apps used in Norway where the selling or exchanging of sexual services online has been indicated to occur. The online arenas we have included are: dating websites and apps, sugar dating websites, chat, discussion-forums and online communities, blogs, pornography websites, individual homepages, other forms of social media and escort sites. This list of different online arenas where sexual services are probably sold or exchanged is not exhaustive nor static, but includes what we believe to be the most relevant and widely used in Norway at this point in time. Many of the individual websites and apps that we chose to explore can often be placed within a number of different arenas. For example, some social networking sites include elements from dating apps as well as chat or discussion forums. We have placed them under the arena we felt was most applicable to our mapping process. Websites or apps that are not included in this findings section were deemed non-relevant for a number of reasons. These included: they were non-legitimate websites/apps, or were no longer functional; very few people in Norway used the website/app; they were too difficult to map due to ethical reasons (e.g. we were unable to conduct a passive mapping or clearly indicate that Nadheim is an organization and not an individual), or there was little or no indication of the direct selling or exchanging of sexual services via that website/app.

#### **Dating websites and apps**

The majority of dating websites or apps appear to operate as straight-forward dating sites. Despite lots of sexualized content, many users are only looking for a date, hook-up or a potential relationship, not to sell/buy or exchange sexual services for money or other resources. However, some of the key persons we spoke to stated that when using dating apps to meet a potential partner they have been asked about selling sex, even though they were not originally on the website/app with this in mind. There are many sites that are not legitimate or serious, with numerous false profiles, as well as automated messaging where one needs to pay to be able to see or respond to a message

from another user/profile. Searching for people who are aiming to sell or exchange sexual services via dating websites and apps is very challenging and time-consuming. Below are the main dating websites/apps that are currently used in Norway and were found to be potentially associated with the exchange or selling of sexual services online:

**Tinder** – Tinder is a free location-based online dating app. It functions by showing photos of potential matches who are in close proximity to the user. The user then “swipes left” on the photo if they are not interested in the other person, and “right” if they are interested. If someone who the user indicated that they were interested in also “swipes right”, the app informs them immediately. The two users are then encouraged to contact each other. Tinder uses the phones GPS to ascertain the users geographical location and their Facebook information to create a profile. As with most apps, Tinder is constantly evolving. For example, Tinder has recently integrated Instagram, so that people can view more about their potential dates life. Some profiles on Tinder are very sexually suggestive and it is quite clear that many people use Tinder in order to meet someone to have sex with. This does not mean that there is necessarily an exchange of money or other resources in these situations. Some users of Tinder have contacted us via our Nadheim-profile stating that they have received many offers for buying sex, but have never acted upon these. Other actors in the field have also confirmed that many offer to buy or sell sexual services via Tinder.

**Grindr** – Grindr describes itself as “the world’s largest social networking app for gay, bi, curious and queer men”. The app is free but there is also a subscription-based version, and its main function is as a location-based dating app. The app uses the phones GPS system, allowing the user to see who in their near vicinity is also on Grindr, and contact them if they are interested. Grindr can be linked to the users Instagram, Twitter and/or Facebook account. We know that Grindr’ is used by some people as a platform to sell or exchange sexual services for money or other resources, but it is difficult to say concretely to what extent and frequency this occurs.

### **Sugar dating websites**

Sugar dating websites are targeted at those who are looking for a beneficial relationship. It usually involves an older man who is “economically stable”, known as a Sugar Daddy, and a younger (beautiful) woman, known as a Sugar Babe. Sugar Mamas and Sugar Boys do exist but not as frequently. Although the explicit exchange of sexual services for money (or prostitution) is forbidden on these websites, we know that some people do use these websites in order to sell or exchange sexual services for money or another form of compensation. Some key persons we have spoken to have had their profile deleted from a Sugar Dating website after explicitly writing how much money they

charged for selling their sexual services. They therefore use different code words and phrases or explicitly sexual photographs to demonstrate that they are looking for a transactional exchange of sex for money or other resources.

Many people have told us that they do not like to use these websites to earn money and prefer clear-cut transactional deals. They are often deemed to be an inefficient way to earn money as long dates or holidays can be time and energy-demanding, as well resulting in the loss of potentially-earned money from other customers. These situations are also considered to be more risky as many customers want more than the person selling is willing to give e.g. sex without a condom as they want the *real* girlfriend experience.

The most popular and relevant Sugar Dating website in Norway at present is Sugardaters.com.

**SugarDaters.com** – SugarDaters is described as “a serious dating site, especially targeted at those searching for a beneficial relationship”. It is a Danish website that was created in 2013, with the Norwegian branch opening in 2014. It claims to be the biggest sugar dating website in Scandinavia. It is free for Sugar Babes to use this site. They make a profile which includes a photograph and information about themselves, such as height, weight and education level. They can also write a brief *profile text* which usually includes information about their own interests and what they want from a sugar daddy/mama. It is also free for Sugar Daddies or Sugar Mamas to create a profile and start searching, however, they must pay in order to communicate with potential Sugar Babes. The first contact is usually a message via SugarDaters, but many profiles suggest using other forms of communication such as Snapchat or private email.

SugarDaters.com explicitly states that sugar dating is not a form of prostitution, and some profiles on the website state very clearly that “sex is not on offer”. However, it is clear that many who have a profile on this website do expect the exchange of some sort of resource in return for sexual services provided. Whether these individuals view this to be a form of prostitution or not is unknown. Some profiles are more explicit than others, stating exactly what they expect in return for services provided e.g. money for studies, luxurious gifts, or trips to a spa or a holiday.

### **Chat, discussion-forums and online communities**

We have chosen to combine chat, discussion-forums and online communities in this report. Although these sites can function in different ways, many of the websites we found functioned simultaneously as discussion-forums, chat websites as well as a general social networking community. They are typically online platforms for people with similar experiences, interests or lifestyles to meet or communicate. Although they

do not allow or advocate the selling of sex or prostitution via their sites, there are a number of different chat forums and online communities where the exchange or selling of sexual services can, and potentially does, occur. However, it is difficult to ascertain to what degree this actually happens on the various individual sites. The main websites/apps within Norway to note are:

**Nakenprat** – A Norwegian online community with forums, groups, erotic chat – with or without web cameras, erotic internet-shops, links to pornography sites etc. The forums typically include: users uploaded photos or films with pornographic content (both of themselves and others); adverts where users search for sex partners and; individual sale-forums where items or experiences such as urine, used underwear, photos, videos, skype or webcam shows, are sold. It is free to register and has a minimum age limit of 18 years.

It is difficult to say concretely that selling or exchanging of sexual services between people who have met on Nakenprat definitely occurs, as many conversations take place within private forums/chat rooms/private messages. However, there are many who “hint” at buying/selling/exchanging sexual services on the open forums. Many people state that they have an apartment where they can meet, or they suggest meeting at a parking place, spa or public toilet. We do not know if money or other resources are exchanged for sexual services at these meetings.

**Eros** – An online chat site. Users can go into various chat rooms with different themes e.g. 20+ (best for those aged between 20-30 years), BDSM<sup>5</sup> or Fetish, and talk with all the others who are logged into that room for a joint chat. These joint rooms have a moderator. You can also ask to talk privately in a closed room with others – the private rooms do not have a moderator. It is popular to use webcams during these private discussions. Some people also have webcams on during the public chats.

It is free to register on Eros and users must be 16+. Many use a nickname – some of which can be quite sexually suggestive e.g. “slave searching for assignment” “lettpult dame søker (searching for an easy-to-fuck lady)” “suger deg (will suck you)” “liker yngre jenter (I like younger girls)”. At the time of our mapping the majority of users were registered as 50+, with roughly 90% of users registered as male and most communicated in Norwegian.

It is very time-consuming to find someone who explicitly sells sexual services via Eros, but there were many who indicated that they wanted to buy sexual services. Our impression is that many use this site to discuss fantasies and fetishes, rather than the explicit transaction of sexual services. This impression has been further

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<sup>5</sup> Bondage and Discipline (BD), Dominance and Submission (DS), Sadism and Masochism (SM).



strengthened since none of those we interviewed mentioned Eros as a site they were familiar with.

**Gaysir** – This is Norway’s largest net community and meeting place for gay, bisexual and transgender people, with many active users. It is free to create a profile on this website, and has an age-limit of over 16 years. There is a forum for people to discuss different topics as well as an online shop. A large part of Gaysir’s communication deals with sexuality, including exploration of sexual identity, exchange of experiences and nude pictures. Although Gaysir have a no-tolerance policy for prostitution on their site, inquiries or requests for selling or buying sexual services do occur. We cannot concretely say how many of these requests result in people actually selling or exchanging sexual services for money or other resources.

## **Blogs**

From our initial mapping, there are very few who use a blog to directly sell or exchange sexual services online in Norway. The majority of bloggers who did discuss selling or exchanging sexual services had not been active for a number of years. Those who were active often used their blog to “tell about their secret life”. Those that did directly use their blog to sell or exchange sexual services, often had a link to: their own individual homepage; and/or an advertisement on an escort website; and/or a “net shop” where it was possible to buy items such as used underwear.

## **Pornography sites**

There are many pornography sites available where there could be an association with selling sex. Several websites have adverts for the sale of sex, where you must be a paying member of the page in order to reply to an advert. Our impression is that there are many false adverts. There is no clear indication that pornography sites are key platforms for people to organise the selling or exchanging of sexual services between individuals. However, there has been an increase in individual profiles on escort websites linking to pornography-style videos, via different sites such as pornhub, youtube, youporn and vimeo. In addition, through our interviews with key persons it has been suggested that pornography potentially influences the services customers request.

## **Individual homepages**

There are many different types of homepages where people can advertise the sale of sexual services. Unlike advertising on an escort page, those who use them can customise or individualise the design of their page. Some people use portals such as

eskortejenter.net or escortbook.com to advertise their homepages. Others are completely independent (i.e. you create the webpage independently – suggesting knowledge about how internet webpages function and resources to keep one up and running).

Most homepages appear to be run by individual people who also advertise on escort sites but use their homepage to give customers more information or show more photos as a form of marketing strategy. Most of the individual homepages we have found are advertised via different platforms. For example some on RealEscort will have a link to their own homepage, whilst others will have a link to their homepage from their Facebook, Instagram or Twitter account.

### **Other forms of social media**

There are many forms of social media where people can connect with each other online. People who sell sexual services predominantly use these different platforms as a way of advertising or marketing their services online, and often direct potential customers to another platform or website e.g. homepage or profile on an escort website. It is challenging and time-consuming to find people who exchange sexual services for resources other than money via these social media platforms. Below are the main social media websites/apps that are currently used in Norway and were found to be associated with the exchange or selling of sexual services online:

**Instagram** – an app used globally for people to share photos and experiences with friends, family and followers. Although there are many adverts for official or professional escort sites, it is very time and energy-demanding to find individual people who sell or exchange sexual services via Instagram in Norway specifically. Therefore, Instagram appears to be predominantly used as an additional marketing tool for many who sell sexual services online, rather than the main platform where the initial contact or transactional exchange of sexual services occur. We only had access to profiles that were public or open on Instagram, therefore we could not map private or closed profiles where the exchange of sexual services were potentially occurring.

**Twitter** – an online social networking tool, where users post 140 character messages (tweets) of what is going on in their lives along with links to things they think are interesting, funny or useful to their followers. It is fairly easy to find individual Twitter accounts of people who sell sexual services online, by searching for #escort, #sexworker, #escortoslo for example. Many use Twitter as a form of advertising or marketing, and usually signpost potential customers to their individual homepage or to an advert they have on an escort website.

## **Messaging apps and other online communication tools**

People selling or exchanging sexual services online do not meet potential customers via online messaging apps, however it is worth including them since they are regularly used as a form of communicating with customers, replacing for example traditional SMS messaging. WhatsApp, Viber, Line and Kik were the most commonly named during our mapping phase. These apps are particularly useful for people who travel between different countries as they can use the same WhatsApp account (for example) in the various countries they are in. In addition, they avoid potentially expensive data charges if the user has access to free WiFi or has adequate data capacity. Furthermore, they also allow unlimited messages to be sent, as well as the ability to exchange videos, photos, GIFs and emoticons. Snapchat and skype web cam shows are also commonly used as forms of communication or means of selling or exchanging sexual services online.

## **Escort websites**

There are a few main escort websites currently dominating the Norwegian market. Some websites are mainly aimed at women or transgender individuals selling sexual services to men, whilst others are predominantly aimed at men selling sexual services to men. Some people advertise on a number of different escort sites, whilst others will have multiple different adverts on the same website. This is usually a marketing strategy, as although they need to pay for each additional different profile, it means they can alter their various adverts to appeal to a wider range of customers, thereby increasing their chance of paid work.

Most adverts have a brief description and photos of the person advertising. Some people use real photos with their faces clearly showing, others blur out their face or identifying features, whilst others use fake photos. Many of the escort websites have a feature so that those advertising can have their photos verified by those running the escort website. Some people use a video as an additional advertising technique. Customers can contact those selling by sending a message via the escort website, however many of those advertising have additional or preferential methods of communication e.g. SMS, phone calls, Snapchat or WhatsApp.

## ***Residency status and travel***

Among those who advertise on escort websites we know that they have various different residency statuses, which impacts upon what rights they are entitled to in Norway, and also how long they are allowed to stay. The largest proportion of people advertising as escorts in Norway are located in Oslo, with Bergen and Stavanger being the other main cities. Some people stay in one location, but we know that many are very mobile, either travelling between different cities in Norway, or in and out of different countries. Those we have met at Nadheim who travel regularly in and out of Norway often stay for a 3-4 week period before moving onto another EU/EEA country or returning home. Most of

the escort websites have an option for those advertising to have a travel itinerary showing which Norwegian cities/towns or countries they plan to travel to, and when.

### ***Accommodation, incalls and outcalls***

Some people work alone, others in pairs or with a friend or colleague. Some share customers, others work entirely independently. Many people work from a shared apartment as this can be considered safer, although many also point to the fact that renting in Norway is expensive so it is cheaper to share with someone else. Some people meet customers in their own apartment as *incalls*, others have two separate apartments, where they live from one and work from the other. Some people meet customers as *outcalls*, so may meet at the customer's own apartment, a hotel or a sauna for example. Some people who travel around between different European or Norwegian cities will use online rental websites such as Airbnb in order to rent an apartment to work from for a few days or weeks. Some people will actively advertise their need for an apartment to rent via their escort profile. Others rely on word of mouth through friends and associates, or information provided by current or potential customers.

### ***Human trafficking, organised work and agencies.***

We know through contact with the Norwegian police that human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation does occur within online prostitution, however, through our mapping activities we are unable to say anything tangible on this situation. We suspect that the most vulnerable people, with the least resources, often lack the time or freedom to talk with those who ring from Nadheim as part of our outreach-work online. In addition, those with limited knowledge about their rights or whose movements are restricted or controlled by someone else may be too scared to talk with us as they do not know who we are and what we want.

Although we cannot say anything concrete regarding human trafficking within online prostitution, our mapping activities have shown that there are different degrees of organisation of those who sell sexual services online. Some profiles have the same or very similar-looking photos, profile-texts or phone numbers as other profiles, which could be suggestive of some form of organisation. However, profiles that are similar to others is not always indicative of one individual being controlled by another person. Some people report copying the text from other profiles or stealing photographs from other people. A few people have told us how they help others to write their profile text, or have received help themselves, typically due to limited computer or language skills. Some people have reported paying for a "package", which can consist of airplane tickets, a telephone and sim card, provision of an apartment to work from, having photographs taken, text written and a profile on an escort website prepared and set up.

Agencies are another service some people use when selling sexual services online via escort websites. We have specifically heard about agencies from Russian women we have met through this project. These agencies will usually have a secretary who will



answer a number of different phone numbers and messages, organising transactions with different customers. Many have pointed to disadvantages when working for agencies, such as: lack of control over which customers they take, this can result in a security risk as they are unable to evaluate potential customers; “regular customers” may be given away to another person working; they can lose control over their photos; and in addition they pay for these services.

### ***Obtaining and sharing information among people selling or exchanging sexual services***

Some people who sell or exchange sexual services online via escort websites are not in contact with anyone else who sells or exchanges sexual services online. Other people share useful information and contact details with others from a similar group e.g. Russian women, or those within the Latin-American environment. Information shared may include details of dangerous customers, or apartments where it is possible to sell sex from. Some people meet directly face to face or are part of a closed-group online e.g. communicate via WhatsApp or a discussion forum. Many have stated that customers are often an important source for information such as, advice for travelling around Norway, and information regarding hotels or other places they can work from. Some report being offered a place to rent directly from customers, a few of whom expect to have sex in addition to a paying lodger. Some people have contact with support organisations and various health organisations within Norway, whilst others have contact with support organisations in other countries.

The main escort websites currently being used in Norway are:

**RealEscort.com** remains the most dominate and widely-used escort site in Norway at present. It is free to use this site and you do not require a profile to log in as a customer. It is run by BLS Advertising GmbH in Germany and operates in a number of different countries including Denmark, Sweden, Russia and Poland. Norway has, by far, the largest number of people advertising. At the time of our mapping, people who wanted to sell sexual services were able to create a profile and pay for the number of days that they wanted their advert to be available on the site e.g. 750NOK for 15 days. There are also options to pay additional fees for a “premium-placed advert” i.e. so that your advert appears on the main page. Those creating a profile have the option of using different credit cards, including prepaid credit cards such as “SpendOn Prepaid Credit Card” which are available at Norwegian shops such as Rema1000. This option means that you do not need to use your own personal credit card and personal identification. It is free for customers to use this site.

When we conducted our mapping, the majority of those advertising were women, transgender women and clinics (clinics are usually individuals offering some sort of massage). On average, there were not as many men (who usually sold sexual services to women or couples), couples (a man and woman selling together), or

duos (typically two women selling together) advertising. The number of agencies (Thai massage parlours) advertising fluctuates constantly.

As a customer it is possible to conduct an advanced search. This could include, for example, nationality, gender, age, which services an escort provides, language spoken, those that have validated pictures only, or appearance e.g. eye colour. There is an option to leave reviews for individual escorts. Some people turn this function off. Some also have a blog page through RealEscort detailing for example, experiences they have had, different customers, travel plans and additional information about services they offer. It is normal for people to write what prices they charge, which services they charge and what expectations they have about the appointment e.g. clean, hygienic customer with condom only. It is also possible to have a video linked to an advert on RealEscort.

**Escort-date.eu** – a smaller, less-professional and cheaper escort site in comparison to RealEscort. However, it still has a number of active users with a variety of nationalities. It is free to view/search for an escort but you need to pay if you send a private message or contact anyone. It is predominantly women who advertise on Escort-date, but it is also possible to search for: boys, lesbians, transgender individuals, gays, massage salons, (strip-tease) clubs and duos. However, when we conducted our mapping there were no lesbians, massage salons or duos advertising. Most people did not write their prices on their profile. When we conducted our mapping, the majority of people advertising were based in Oslo, with a few in other areas of Norway represented. Some people also had a “travel diary” indicating where they plan to be working over the next few days or weeks. Many travelled internationally.

**Planet Romeo.com** – (previously known as Gay Romeo) is described as a “social network for gay, bi and transgender people”. It is used to search for friendship, dating, clubs, and other things. It has 1.8 million users in 192 different countries. It can be used as a website or as an app. The website version includes a specific link to an Escort site where you need a profile to access this link. The app version does not have a link to the Escort site.

Planet Romeo functions mainly as a dating website, with some people are looking for friendship, others for a “hook up”, and others for a more serious relationship. As with the other dating websites we have mapped, there were some profiles that were suggestive of selling or exchanging sexual services, often for some sort of compensation. In addition profiles clearly stating that they are not interested in meeting an escort – thereby indicating that people do use the regular dating site as a platform to meet potential customers.

The escort site has a number of unique features such as “linked profiles” – how many other users “know” this user, so acts as a way of confirming that the person advertising is legitimate; “guestbook entries” i.e. reviews of their services and;

“gift PLUS” – someone can buy a PLUS membership as a gift. People contact each other by a private message on the website, others write their email or phone number so they can be contacted by sms or whatsapp for example. It is free to have an Escort profile, but there are options to pay extra for upgrading their profile, thereby being highlighted on the main Escorts Search page and are listed first in search results. In addition, the site states that those who pay for a PLUS membership are likely to be more genuine and professional, and not miss appointments etc.

**RentMen** – very similar to Planet Romeo escort site, except it is possible to include videos on the adverts.

### 3.2 DIFFERENT GROUPS SELLING OR EXCHANGING SEXUAL SERVICES ONLINE IN NORWAY

In this section we will describe the different groups of people we have met through our mapping stage who are selling or exchanging sexual services online in Norway.

#### *Different groups who are selling or exchanging sexual services via escort websites*

- **Nationality or Region**

It is not always possible to say with certainty where people originally come from – they may not write on their advert their nationality or which country they are from, or may write a different country entirely. For example we know some people who are from an African country have written on their advert that they are Brazilian. There are many potential reasons for this such as protecting their own privacy/identity, or for marketing strategies. This also means that we do not always know which type of residency status they have in Norway and what services or rights they are entitled to. However, we do know where some people are from or are at least able to make an informed assumption regarding which area or continent they originate from. Despite this potential ambiguity regarding where in the world people are from and what type of residency status they have, we have found that it is still useful to describe the differences that we see between groups based on nationality or geographical region that they are originally from.

Nearly all countries and continents are represented but the most common nationalities or regions are:

**Eastern Europe** (predominantly Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Albania, Bulgaria and Romania)

Unlike the other groups, those who are from Eastern Europe are predominantly women, many of them young, advertising that they are in their early 20s. It is rare that those who advertise online also sell on the street. Of those we meet at Nadheim, some say that this

is their first time to Norway, and a few state that it is the first time that they are selling sexual services. Some have been to Norway a number of times already and this is the first time they have heard about Nadheim. Some travel to Norway completely independently and do not have contact with other people who are selling sexual services. Others work with friends or colleagues and share information about customers or support organisations with each other. Whether they are from an EU/EEA country, or have a permanent residence or citizenship in one of these countries or not, will impact upon the rights they have in Norway, if they can work or not, and how long they can stay. Within this Eastern European group, Russian women who have residency in Spain is a significant group.

### **Latin America**

People from Latin America are another large group who sell sexual services online in Norway. There is a mixture of women, transgender women and men, with a broad age range from 20s up to 60s. They predominantly work online, although we know of some people who sell on the street and advertise online on the side. Many people from Latin America have some form of residency in another European country e.g. Spain. Some people will have, for example a Spanish passport, others will have permanent residency in Spain. These variations in residency status obviously impacts upon their ability to travel around Europe and Norway, as well as which official rights or work opportunities they may have. Many within the Latin American environment have contact with each other and share information about customers or support organisations.

### **Asia**

People who describe themselves as Asian are another main group who sell sexual services online in Norway. They predominantly describe themselves as being from Thailand, with some stating that they are from China, The Philippines and Japan. There is often a broad age range from 20s up to 50s. Of the Thai community we meet, they are predominantly women, but we also meet transgender women and very occasionally men. Some advertise as individual escorts but many are also connected to Thai massage parlours. Some Thai massage parlours advertise separately on escort websites. These adverts usually do not explicitly state that they offer sexual services, and many massage institutes do not want to be connected to prostitution. However, we know that many do offer sexual services even if the advert states “massages only”. It is unclear how much control, if any, the owners of the massage parlours have over the individuals who work there.

Many of the Thai women we have met tend to live permanently in Norway. They are either married to, or have previously been married to, a Norwegian man. There is also a large proportion of Thai women who live or have lived in Sweden. Many of the transgender Thai women tend to travel around Europe, working in Norway for short periods at any one time.

## **Norway**

There are a number of Norwegians who sell sexual services online in Norway. Among the Norwegians who sell sexual services via escort websites it is predominantly, but not exclusively, women selling to men. There are also men and transgender women who sell to men, women and couples. The average age range is from 20 – 40+ years, and the majority only work online as opposed to other arenas such as the street or institutes. Among the Norwegian people we have met related to this project, a variety of different situations and experiences have been described. Some people have quite chaotic lives and value the assistance they can receive from organisations such as Nadheim. Others, express no need for external support. Some work entirely independently and do not have contact with other people selling sexual services online. Whilst others work alongside other people or have regular contact with others through active participation in online forums.

## **Africa**

There is a small group who sell sexual services online and state that they are from an African country. The group consists of both men and women, with transgender individuals being an exception. Of those we have spoken directly to through our outreach-work online, we have assumed that a proportion of the women have been originally from Nigeria due to their accent. This group is quite varied in age, from 20s up to 40s.

- **Gender**

We have also chosen to discuss the different groups who sell sexual services online by gender because we have experienced an increase in the number of men and transgender women who Nadheim have come in contact with over the last few years.

## **Women**

Women remain the largest group who sell or exchange sexual services online in Norway. Many do not state which country they are originally from, but of those that do, a plethora of different countries and regions are represented. Ages typically vary from 20s to 60+. Residency status, length of time in Norway and whether they travel around or not varies greatly. Some work only online, whilst others also have experience from other arenas.

## **Transgender individuals**

Transgender women are a proportionally large group who sell sexual services online in Norway. During our mapping stage we did not come in contact with any transgender men selling sexual services online, however, this does not mean that transgender men do not sell or exchange sexual services online. Of the transgender women we have met at Nadheim, they are usually from Latin America, Thailand and other Asian countries, but we also sporadically see adverts for people from Norway and other countries. The

age range is often quite broad from 20 – 50 years. Of the non-Norwegians, many have residency in another European country – either permanent residency or citizenship. For the majority, selling sexual services is their main source of income. Transgender women from Latin America are often in contact with each other, as are transgender women from Thailand.

### **Men**

Some men who sell sexual services online in Norway sell to women or couples, although the majority sell to other men. The men we have met through our mapping and outreach work have a variety of nationalities but are predominantly Latin American, European, Norwegian or African. They have very different age ranges and various residency statuses. Some state that they have other jobs and sell sexual services online on the side, whilst for others this is their main source of income. Some men work alone whilst others work with other men usually from the same apartment.

### ***Different groups who are potentially exchanging sexual services for money or other resources online in Norway via grey zone arenas.***

Due to the challenges we have encountered during the mapping phase of grey zone arenas our findings regarding the different groups within these various arenas has been limited. However, what we have found is that young LGBTQI<sup>6</sup> individuals are particularly vulnerable to being approached about selling or exchanging sexual services online. Within this group some sources indicated that young gay men are approached to sell sex most regularly, and we saw indications that transgender individuals were often viewed, or discussed in a sexualised manner by others online. Of the key persons we interviewed, it was only women who reported being approached to sell sexual services via dating websites, when their intention was in fact to meet a potential partner, not to sell sex. Of those who use online community sites to sell sexual services such as used underwear and urine, it is predominantly women who sell these objects and men who buy.

## **3.3 NEEDS AND CHALLENGES RELATED TO SELLING AND EXCHANGING SEXUAL SERVICES ONLINE**

In this section we will discuss the various needs or challenges associated with selling or exchanging sexual services online identified during this mapping stage. Some were identified directly by services users and key persons, whilst others have been identified

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<sup>6</sup> Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex

by us, the project team. This distinction is worthy of note since our findings will have implications for future service development, and acknowledging the significance, or not, that service users and key persons placed on various themes will impact upon the success of our service development plans. It should be noted that everyone we spoke to had different experiences related to selling or exchanging sexual services online, some of which were positive, whilst others were negative. The needs and challenges described in this report do not apply to everyone, and are dependent upon the different circumstances individuals are living in e.g. residency status, gender, nationality, and their own personal history. Below we have described the main needs or challenges that arose during our mapping activities, many of which were interlinked. Our mapping activities focused mainly on the challenges or needs relating specifically to selling or exchanging sexual services *online*, however some topics discussed are also relevant for other arenas where sex is sold or exchanged.

- **Security strategies**

Security strategies were a dominant theme that came up again and again during this mapping stage. Various strategies to increase security or reduce risk were described, and were often different to the strategies employed by those working in other arenas e.g. the street or a massage parlour . The strategies described started with how a profile or advert was designed (e.g. how much personal information was provided, the use of fake photographs), how a customer was evaluated or chosen, how or where people chose to physically meet, if they chose to work with a colleague or not, through to the persona they used with customers, and potential escape-routes or exit-tactics. Everyone evaluated risks differently and tolerated things differently. We have actively chosen not to discuss in detail the various specific security strategies employed by those we met within this public report. This is to protect those who shared their experiences and strategies with us. The information will, however, be used internally within Nadheim in order to assist those who sell or exchange sexual services online to improve any security strategies they may utilise.

Language skills was an area that could increase or decrease a person's ability to manage their own personal security, and was a specific challenge for non-Norwegians. A common language between the person selling and the person buying increases the ability for the person selling to negotiate with their customer, know and understand what sexual services they have advertised on their profile, and use intuitive strategies such as listening to their "gut instinct" when talking to a customer on the telephone before meeting.



- **Practical skills and knowledge of how computers, smartphones and /or the internet function, and maintaining personal privacy online**

The general use, and importance of understanding how computers and/or smart phones function was a recurring theme that came up, often indirectly through the different mapping activities. This included the ability for people to create their own advertisements, blurring of photographs so they were not easily identifiable (if this was desirable), formulation and writing of own profile texts and the ability to block different phone numbers or unwanted customers.

Ensuring own personal privacy and security online could be difficult if the person had limited knowledge about how the internet and different communication devices functioned. For example, smart phones, tablets and laptops can connect with each other, so that data, photos and/or personal information may be automatically shared between these devices, and potentially with others. In addition, different online platforms or apps may be connected revealing more about someone's identity than they had planned e.g. their phone number may be connected to their Facebook account which has an open security setting. Furthermore, some apps have the ability to use the phones GPS system in order to monitor where the user physically is or has been. Other strategies such as the use of *gulesider* (yellow pages) to find out a customer's real identity, or likewise, for a customer to find out the seller's identity, were not always known to people who were new to Norway. In addition, more simple strategies such as using two or more telephones in order to separate work and private-life more easily, was not employed by all of those we came in contact with through our mapping activities.

- **Psychological challenges**

Feelings of loneliness, isolation, shame and stress were often highlighted during this mapping phase. Some people did not routinely communicate with, or meet others, who also sold or exchanged sexual services online. As well as potentially feeling isolated, this situation could mean that the sharing of useful information such as different support or health services or lists of dangerous customers might not automatically be shared between individuals or different groups. The need to have someone to talk to who has knowledge about prostitution and the potential challenges related to selling or exchanging sexual services online was highlighted as important. Some people discussed not being able to, or not wanting to, tell family or friends about their experiences of selling or exchanging sexual services. Not only could this increase feelings of loneliness or shame, but could also add to the stress of managing the complexities of "living a double-life". This included the fear of "being found out" by family, friends or work colleagues, or the challenges associated with selling or exchanging sexual services from the apartment that they also lived in.

For those who travelled around Norway and/or Europe, the strain related to constantly organising the logistics of working and living in different areas was sometimes described as a problem. Some people, whose length of stay in Norway was limited by visa or residency status restrictions, described how they often worked more than they wanted to, pushing their own boundaries in order to earn more money. In addition, others described anxiety related to the fact that many aspects of their life was lived in a grey zone between what was legal and what was considered illegal.

The majority of people selling or exchanging sexual services online relied on their mobile phones or smart phones to communicate with customers. As is common in today's society, most people described having their mobile phones turned on and with them at all times. Some described an assumption or pressure to always be "available" or a feeling of "always being at work". Others discussed the challenges related to being offered work at unpredictable times, such as when out socialising with friends, and the subsequent difficulties associated with explaining why they suddenly needed to leave these social occasions.

This ability or need to separate *work* and *free-time*, was also linked to the ability to set clear boundaries with customers, both physically and psychologically. This could, for example, be related to customers regularly contacting them through a variety of different platforms (e.g. SMS, emails, WhatsApp), or forming inappropriate emotional attachments. However, it should be noted here that some people did not find it problematic to separate work from their free-time or private-life, whilst others proactively sent messages via SMS or WhatsApp to customers in order to "keep them warm".

A few people described how some customers expected them to participate in drug-taking, or requested specific services that they did not actually feel comfortable providing. Some related these specific requests (e.g. unusual fetishes or hardcore sex) to the influence of pornography. Those who had experience with grey-zone arenas discussed the potential boundarylessness of these experiences. For example, if someone were to take you on holiday, there may not be a clear transaction or agreement made beforehand, and the buyer may potentially expect too much e.g. the "real girlfriend or boyfriend experience" including sex without a condom.

One challenge directly related to selling or exchanging sexual services online was the potential addiction to the internet and smart phones. For example, some people described constantly checking their own advertisement to see if they had any potential customers. Frequently monitoring and comparing other escorts pages/blogs/reviews was another theme discussed – can you be doing a better job yourself? Should you change your own prices? Another specific challenge related to the potential permanence of the internet, and photos or videos being shared without the owner's permission. Some described being unable to stop, or feeling that they had no other option than to continue selling or exchanging sexual services since identifiable photos and/or videos of them were now permanently and easily accessible on the internet.

- **Sexual health, healthcare and social support**

Some people discussed the fear of being infected with HIV or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) due to regularly selling or exchanging sexual services, with some lacking basic sexual health knowledge, including how STIs are actually transmitted and the use of different medications such as Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP). Others discussed how they received pressure to have sex without condoms from customers. This was particularly noted when there appeared to be limited work available. Some people wanted to be accompanied to appointments at different health services, either for emotional support or due to lack of experience using the Norwegian health system. Lack of knowledge or understanding of specific problems related to selling or exchanging sexual services amongst health personnel was another issue discussed. This was specifically related to psychological or mental health issues, as well as the provision of health care that is appropriate or tailored to meet the diverse needs of different patient groups e.g. men or transgender people who sell/exchange sexual services.

For those who travelled in and out of Norway for short periods of time due to residency status or visa regulations, there was a need to maximize their earning potential when they were actually in Norway and therefore they often worked as much as possible. As well as being very demanding, this also meant they did not necessarily have time to search for, or visit, support services. This highlighted the need for useful and accessible information about different support services available in Norway, as well as a need to alter how support services are provided in order to meet the specific needs of these highly mobile populations. In addition, we have surmised that lack of a common language could impact upon an individual's ability to interact with and utilise support or health services.

- **Practical Questions about Rights and the Law**

Many people had questions or queries relating to tax, as well as exchanging and sending money abroad that had been earned through selling sex. Knowledge about "general rights" in Norway was another common topic e.g. rights to healthcare, NAV<sup>7</sup>, visas, residency permits, how to apply for a Norwegian passport etc. This was particularly important for those who were not Norwegian, specifically transmigrants or newly-arrived migrants. Knowledge about the criminalisation of buying sex in Norway (often known as the sex purchasers law or "sexkjøplovern"<sup>8</sup>) as well as the role of the police were other themes that came up regularly. Many people were wary about the police and were reluctant to report violence or robbery due to fear of being thrown out of the country. Therefore, the need to be able to contact the police in a safe and supported way was highlighted.

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<sup>7</sup> NAV is the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration

<sup>8</sup> Straffeloven 1902 § 202a

- **Practical issues – accommodation, language and work**

Many who were not originally from Norway and/or travelled around the country spoke about the need to find somewhere to live and/or work from. Some described experiences of being “blacklisted” from hotels or rental apartment companies, or being fearful that hotel staff would suspect they were selling sexual services and demand that they leave. However it should be noted that some described experiences of those they were renting an apartment from ‘turning a blind eye’, or hotel staff actually assisting them in securing customers. Some people lacked resources, and/or knowledge about the Norwegian rental market and thus the ability to secure a safe and reliable place to work from. This meant that they were often reliant on others to help, which could place them in an easily exploitative position e.g. knowingly paying a very high rent in order to have a safe place to work and/or live from.

Some people wanted to learn or practice their Norwegian language skills. However, for transmigrants specifically, attending regular lessons either at Nadheim, or through other support organisations, was not always possible due to their mobile lifestyles.

Whilst some people spoke about wanting to find alternative work, there was an acknowledgment that this was often not a realistic option for them. Many described being dependent upon the relatively good money they earned through selling sexual services online. This dependence could be related to maintaining a standard of living they had become accustomed to, but more regularly it was that they were supporting family members or other dependents in their home country, or were saving money to secure themselves financially for the future. Secure, permanent, well-paid alternative work opportunities are not always possible in Norway, especially for those who do not have other skills, experience, education or understanding of the Norwegian system and language. This means, that many we met were only able to secure low-skilled work, with low wages, that were often on a temporary basis, sometimes without a contract. Others could only secure alternative work within the black market, thereby finding themselves in a precarious position where they were at risk of not being able to pay for basics such as rent or food on a regular basis. Faced with these challenges, many described the need to, or preference in, returning to selling or exchanging sexual services online in order to survive.

## CONCLUSION

### Summary of Findings

Findings from this mapping phase have shown that escort websites remain the central arena for the selling and exchanging of sexual services online in Norway at present. We also found that sugar dating websites are used both in order to sell and exchange sexual services. Through our mapping activities we have found that the majority of people do not use dating websites/apps, chat and discussion forums and online communities with the explicit intention of selling or exchanging sexual services. However, all of these arenas can function as a platform for selling or exchanging sexual services. Even if someone has not considered selling sex, many who use these different arenas can at some point be asked to sell or buy sex. Social media, blogs and individual homepages are predominantly used as additional advertising methods or marketing strategies and are rarely used as the primary platform for initiating the exchange or selling of sexual services online.

Women remain the largest visible gender group to sell or exchange sexual services online. However, men and transgender women are more visible online than previously observed within other arenas e.g. the streets or massage parlours. With regards to those selling sexual services via escort websites specifically, the main regions or countries represented are Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia and Norway.

The needs and challenges identified during this mapping stage do not apply to everyone, and are dependent upon individual circumstances and situations. Some needs and challenges are specific to selling or exchanging sexual services online. For example, maintaining personal privacy online can be difficult and relies on good knowledge or understanding of how the internet, smart phones and websites/apps function. Other issues such as the pressure of constantly “being at work” or accessible due to the nature of smart phones and the internet today are also highlighted. Furthermore, the potential permanence of identifiable images and videos on the internet can impact upon future choices or options.

The internet can provide easy access to information, but it can also result in the reduction of information-sharing amongst people who are selling or exchanging sexual services online. Unlike other more traditional arenas, such as the streets, some people never come in contact with, or meet face to face with other people who are in a similar situation. In addition, the independence and anonymity that the internet affords can increase the challenge for support services to come in contact with, and build trusting relationships with those selling or exchanging sexual services online.

Other needs and challenges are not necessarily directly unique to being online but are often related to transmigratory patterns or residency status, and thus rights to services in Norway and understanding of Norwegian systems and laws. Those who are new to

Norway can find themselves in easily exploitative situations with regards to obtaining safe and reasonably-priced accommodation to live and work from. Those who are highly mobile, and are only in Norway for short periods often lack time to search for and interact with support services or organisations. Finding alternative work options, if desirable, can be an unachievable or challenging scenario for some.

## **Future needs and recommendations**

The internet is continuously in flux, developing and changing on a daily basis. The findings from this mapping process therefore give insight and knowledge on the different arenas, groups and needs for “this moment in time”. It is imperative to continuously monitor the different arenas and groups as the internet continues to modify and develop, and to ensure that the support services we provide at Nadheim adapt to this dynamic situation, remaining appropriate, accessible and relevant to the needs of our services users.

Selling and exchanging sexual services online remains a significant and growing phenomena, and as such outreach-work online will be a dominating aspect of Nadheim’s work in the future.

Findings from these mapping activities will directly impact upon how we adapt and develop our outreach methods, provision of individual support with a better understanding of the challenges and needs specifically related to the internet, as well as future advocacy work.

Currently we meet and support some groups of people selling sexual services online better than others at Nadheim. We need to ensure that our services are accessible and applicable for all e.g. transmigrants. In particular, to meet the needs of these increasingly mobile groups, we must continue to coordinate and share our knowledge with the various support organisations in Norway, as well as strengthen our international links.

Due to the challenging nature of conducting outreach-work online within the grey zone arenas (websites or apps that are not intentionally designed for, or explicitly aimed at, the exchange of sexual services for money), Nadheim needs to increase its visibility within these different arenas and thus lower its threshold for contact.

The way that Nadheim currently functions, and its direct association with prostitution, means that we face challenges in meeting people who exchange sexual services within the grey zone of prostitution online (i.e. the exchange of sexual services for resources in a way that is not always perceived as, or considered to be, prostitution). If Nadheim is to be successful in meeting this group, we may need to adapt our approach and profile in the future.

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## APPENDIX

### **APPENDIX I – Objectives for main project “Selling and exchanging sexual services online – new groups and arenas”**

The main objective of the project is:

- To provide health and social assistance to people who sell or exchange sexual services on the internet, with the aim to prevent and reduce harmful effects of prostitution on the individual

With specific objectives being:

- To map and increase our knowledge on the different net-arenas where sexual services are sold and exchanged
- To map and identify the target groups own goals and needs for assistance
- To develop methods and tools to ensure that our outreach work meets the actual needs of the target group
- To increase our presence and visibility for the target group, and with this lower the threshold for people to take contact with us as a support centre.
- To increase knowledge within the target group on how to take care of their own psychological and physical health, with a focus on boundary-setting and reducing the risk of sexually transmitted diseases
- To improve the overall services offered to the target group by increasing awareness and knowledge of selling and exchanging sexual services on the internet within the other support organisations

## **APPENDIX II - Template used for systematic mapping of online arenas**

1. When, where, what
  - a. Time and date
  - b. Type of arena
  - c. Who we meet:
    - i. Age
    - ii. Nationality and language
    - iii. Gender
    - iv. Geography
    - v. Residency status
    - vi. Buyer/seller
2. Development of contact
  - a. How the transaction between the customer and seller occurs.
    - i. Word use
    - ii. Do they swap to other arenas?
    - iii. How the contact occurs e.g. phone call, message, email
    - iv. Type of agreement between customer and seller
    - v. Market strategy
    - vi. Where they meet
    - vii. Do they work alone/with others
    - viii. One or many profiles
    - ix. Organisation
      1. Price
      2. Picture
      3. Language
  - b. Who runs the webpage/app
    - i. Norwegian/non-Norwegian
    - ii. Payment
    - iii. Use of time
    - iv. Direct or hidden sale of sexual services
3. Development of contact with us (Nadheim)
  - a. How we present ourselves
    - i. Profile
    - ii. Advert
    - iii. Passive/active
  - b. Text
    - i. Word choice/formulation
  - c. Response
    - i. User/Website
  - d. Communication form
    - i. Chat/SMS/Mail/Telephone
4. What happened, what did we find out?

### **APPENDIX III – Conversation Guide (main questions)**

*(Below are the main questions used during the interviews with key persons. For a copy of the complete guide, including prompt and follow-up questions, please contact Project leader Amy Medin at Nadheim)*

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself?
2. Can you tell me which webpages and apps you use?
3. Which webpages and apps have you used to meet customers?
4. When you began to sell or swap sexual services, did you begin with the internet or did you begin in another arena (such as on the streets, in a club, institute or another place)? Did you begin in Norway or in another country?
5. Do you know about, or do you have experience with websites that are not obvious “escort-sites”, but where it is, nevertheless, possible to swap or sell sex? (When we talk about swapping, we mean for example a place to live, clothes, telephone, help with paper-work, finding a job or other things).
6. Do you have someone to talk with who knows that you sell or swap sex?
7. How do you share experiences with other people who sell or swap sex on the internet?
8. How do you separate between what you do on the internet when you sell or swap sex, with what you do privately or when you have time-off?
9. How do you decide when or how much you will work?
10. How do you keep yourself safe when you work on the internet?
11. How did you come in contact with Nadheim for the first time?
12. If we ring someone, how should we introduce ourselves?
13. Is there anything more you would like to share with us?

#### APPENDIX IV - List of those we have collaborated/communicated with

- **Albertine** – Kirkens Bymisjon's prostitution service/organisation in Stavanger. Albertine currently conduct online outreach on a number of escort websites. In contrast to Nadheim, they also have a low-threshold health service with a nurse.
- **Sex og Samfunn** - a centre for sexual and reproductive health for young adults in Oslo. It has its own health service for people who have bought sexual services.
- **Pro Sentret** – Health centre in Oslo for people who sell or have sold sexual services. It is Norway's national centre of expertise on prostitution.
- **Olafiaklinikken** – a low threshold health centre, specializing in the testing, treatment and follow-up of sexually transmitted diseases. People do not need a social security number to access health care here.
- **PION** - PION is an interest and rights organization for all women, men and transgender people who work as sex workers, escorts or sell erotic services or intimate massages in Norway.
- **Anne Grytbakk**, A university lecturer at NTNU – Institute for social work. Anne has experience of working on projects in Trondheim regarding youth who exchange or sell sexual services.
- **Arne Krokan** – professor in Sociology with NTNU.
- **KRIPOS** - The Norwegian National Criminal Investigation Service is a special agency of the Norwegian Police Service that works with organized and serious crime.
- **Grünerløkka helsestasjon** – Grünerløkka "gender and sexuality" health centre for LGBTQ youth, provides healthcare for Lesbian, Gay, Bi-, and transgender young people aged between 13 – 30 years who live in Oslo. It is a free service, and you do not require a referral to attend.
- **FRI** – FRI is an organisation that works for equality and against discrimination against people who break with gender and sexuality norms in Norway and in the rest of the world
- **Skeiv Ungdom** – is FRI's youth organization for people under 30 years.
- **Uteseksjonens perspektivgruppe** – Uteseksjonen is part of the Central and Greater Oslo division of the Agency for Social and Welfare Services (ASWS, City of Oslo Council). The service provides street-based outreach social work and healthcare targeting at-risk individuals and groups in the downtown area. Our remit includes substance-abuse and criminality prevention, as well as providing health and professional outreach support to individuals with substance-abuse and/or mental-health problems. Uteseksjonen targets individuals in all age groups but has a special focus on children and young adults up to the age of 25.
- **Pegasus (RFSL)** - RFSL Ungdom is the Swedish Youth Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Queer (LGBTQ) Rights. Pegasus has a Chat service available online.

- **PRO Tukipiste** - Pro-tukipiste is a specialist service that promotes participation and human rights of people who work in sex or erotic industry and of those who are victims of trafficking. They provide low threshold social and health services for people involved in sex work and for victims of human trafficking. Their services are situated in Helsinki, Tampere and Turku.
- **Anette Brunovskis** – researcher at FAFO, with specialist research areas in: Human trafficking, migration, the Balkans and Eastern Europe.
- **Helseutvalget** – is involved in gender equality work and targets men who have sex with men, who do not contact other health services. Those who visit them do not need to have a personal number or permanent address.
- **MSO – Medisinernes seksualopplysning** is an idealist organization consisting of doctors and physicians who have been teaching sexual and social education for young people in the Oslo area since 1974.
- **Jim Høyen – manager at Gaysir**
- **Voldektsmottaket på legevakten på Oslo** – A specialist section of Oslo's Emergency Department for people who have been the victim of rape.
- **1000 muligheter** – an NGO for young adults aged up to 25 years. They are aimed at boys, girls, transgender individuals and those who do not want to define themselves. In addition to their support work, they also carry out preventive work in schools, recreation centres and in associations and industry in order to achieve an equal society free from violence.
- **Mikamottagningen Stockholm**- This is Stockholm municipality's prostitution support organisation. Mikamottagningen is open to anyone over 18 years old and receives compensation for having sex with someone or self-harms through sex. The reception is also open to persons exposed to trafficking for sexual purposes.
- **Mikamottagningen Goteborg** – is an activity that is aimed at persons with experience of sex for compensation, of those who have sex to self-harm and/or have been subjected to trafficking for sexual purposes. People who have experience from the strip or porn industry, for example, are also welcome to contact them.

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