



Summary Evaluation of Exit Programmes for Prostitutes Scheme (RUPS II)

- Summary final report -

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Summary

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Study background

Both practice and scientific literature show that there are many barriers to exiting sex work and that it can be a complex process. In 2008, the first Exit Programmes for Prostitution Scheme (RUPS) was introduced by the Dutch government. It concerned a subsidy scheme to enable the development and execution of exit programmes. The aim of RUPS II is to offer a nationwide network of exit programmes. This document summarises the final report of RUPS II, in which the national coverage level of exit programmes is evaluated, and the distribution and management of the future structural funds for exit programmes and the achieved RUPS II results are investigated.

Part I Nationwide coverage of exit programmes

To answer the question to what extent nationwide coverage of exit programmes has been achieved, an inventory has been made of existing exit programmes in the Netherlands, the regional accessibility of the programmes and on which target groups, life areas and sex work sectors the programmes are focused. This issue has mainly been investigated by means of a web survey among municipalities and health and welfare organisations, additional interviews with municipalities and programme providing organisations involved, and information from accountability documents within RUPS II.

Results

The web survey shows that **two third** (90) of the responding municipalities have **exit programmes** for sex workers. Seven percent (9) of the responding municipalities have made **plans** to set up exit programmes. A quarter of the municipalities reported on in the web survey do not offer exit programmes, however, it is possible that these municipalities are **served** by existing exit programmes in the region. Reasons for municipalities to refrain from setting up exit programmes mainly have to do with the fact that the municipality has no policy in place focused on sex workers who want to exit sex work, there is insufficient insight into the needs of the target group to be able to set up suitable programmes, and also the presence of support elsewhere in the region, or a combination of these factors.

In municipalities where exit programmes are offered, 89 percent of these programmes are partially being financed with RUPS II funds (since 2014). Eleven percent of the municipalities reported on offer exit programmes that are *not* financed by RUPS II funds. In most of the municipalities (89%), the exit programmes are in principle also **accessible** to residents of municipalities **in the region** that are not actively involved in the implementation of the programmes. We note that the **subsidy** appears to play an important role in making existing exit programmes widely available in the region. In the regions with exit programmes *not funded by* RUPS II, it turns out that although the offer is more widely available, there is a primary focus on sex workers from within the municipality.

As intended, all exit programmes listed in this study focus on **work/daytime activities** that are not related to sex work – which is one of the preconditions of RUPS. We have observed that most programmes focus on a **wide range** of life areas. For example, attention is often paid to problems concerning the social network, education/courses/training, debts, victimisation of crime (including for example sexual exploitation and sexual violence), housing, income and mental health. Less often programmes are aimed at addiction control, philosophy of life or spirituality, language proficiency, residence permits and return to the country of origin.

Usually, the exit programmes do *not* focus on a specific **gender target group**, nor on sex workers in a specific **sex work sector**. According to the programme providing organisations involved, often the programmes are **not (yet) sufficiently** able to reach male sex workers, home workers, illegal sex workers and victims of sexual exploitation. The same applies to transgender people. Specific exit programmes may be necessary to reach these target groups.

Based on information from the web survey, additional interviews and RUPS II documentation, regional analyses have been made (geographic maps), which show that RUPS II funded programmes now reach **large parts** of the country, that in a small number of regions programmes are largely funded outside the subsidy scheme and that in a few regions plans for an exit offer are currently being made. It is important

to mention that a number of regions have not been reached by this study and that the picture is therefore not 100 percent complete. Moreover, in a number of other regions it remained unclear to what extent the existing exit programmes sufficiently serve the surrounding municipalities in practice and consequently whether there is sufficient regional accessibility.

Conclusion

Although as of 2014 exit programmes have become available in large parts of the country, it seems that **a full nationwide network has not yet been realised**. In order to achieve this, attention needs to be paid to at least two gaps: 1) in some regions exit programmes are available, but *not all parts of the region* are sufficiently served; 2) nationwide, it appears that not all target groups are adequately served, e.g. male sex workers, illegal sex workers, homeworkers, transgender sex workers, and victims of sexual exploitation. In addition, we conclude that most programmes that started in 2014 or later have been realised primarily with the help of RUPS II funds. This unmistakably demonstrates the importance and influence of **the driving role of RUPS II**. A follow-up to the scheme could therefore provide a stimulus for achieving full national coverage in terms of **further development** of programmes (and therefore cooperation) at the regional level and attention to diversity in the target group.

Part II Future financial system

The Rutte III coalition agreement states: ‘The government will make funds available on a long-term basis for a nationwide network of programmes designed to help sex workers wishing to leave prostitution’. The question here is how these funds can best be managed and distributed. To answer this question, the most important **characteristics** of the existing scheme have been mapped out. On the basis of the web survey and group discussions with experts from ministries, municipalities, branch organisations and health and welfare organisations, elements have been identified that must be **retained** and others that require **improvement**. In addition, an exploration has been carried out into other types of arrangements to find out which **elements** could be useful in the future design of the financial system. With the help of this input, an integral analysis was made, and an overview was drawn up of possible **focus areas** for the organisation of the system and themes on which **flanking policies** are desirable.

Results

Based on the integral analysis, the various possible arrangements for financing exit programmes can be weighted as follows:

- **decentralisation grant** to certain municipalities is less obvious, because there is as yet *no national coverage* of exit programmes and not all municipalities have been involved yet. This also applies to the option to place the funds in an existing decentralisation grant for central municipalities. In that case, the funds *would no longer be recognisable* for the specific purpose and the amount per region would be too small to achieve the intended stimulating effect.
- **specific payments** to certain municipalities are also less obvious even though in this case the resources remain *recognisable*. In addition to the aforementioned reasons (*no national coverage* and *insufficient amounts*), specific accounting entails a relatively high *administrative burden*.
- the **subsidy scheme** is the most obvious, given the fact that the intended effect of the scheme (*national coverage*) has not yet been fully achieved. **Optimisation** options could be investigated. This approach would also receive the most support among all – national – parties involved. A direct contribution to civil society organisations may also have advantages from the point of view of accessibility.

Starting from a subsidy scheme, the question is how these resources can be used in a **socially efficient** manner, i.e. for an optimal target range at the lowest possible costs. In concrete terms, this involves three intended effects: a network covering the entire country, appropriate assistance for the target group and minimal administrative burdens for the parties involved. Based on these effects, the following **focus areas** have been mentioned for the future set-up:

- In relation to the financial scope of the scheme, the administrative burdens of the current administration method are high. It is therefore advisable to find out whether **investing the implementation with a specialised service** may be more effective and efficient.

- SMARTer formulation of goals: one of the focus areas in this regard is more emphasis on stimulating people from the target group to exit sex work and potentially permanently (provided that this is formulated as one of the goals of a new regulation).
- Define **subsidisable activities** more explicitly by focusing primarily on components (more intensive process counselling and a coordination structure) that are **supplementary** to the regular, paid-for supply of care and support. This contributes to a fairer distribution of resources between regions.
- For regions where no exit programme exists ('blank spots'), money can be reserved to provide an extra stimulus to organisations with expertise to help develop networks in new regions as well.
- The plan to be submitted could be **more concise** and should focus primarily on target groups, intended results and an activity budget. This helps to reduce administrative burdens.
- Depending on the specific objectives that the scheme aims to achieve, co-financing can be applied in a **differentiated** manner, for example by making it dependent on the subsidy history. The longer a region receives a subsidy, the greater its own financial commitment could be. After all, the subsidy is intended as a **temporary incentive**: as a step towards more regular funding.
- It is advisable to work with **clear** and preferably **simple formats** for accounting, integral final reports (content-related and financial) and auditing. If municipalities play a more explicit role, lighter requirements may suffice.

When designing the financial system, careful consideration is needed as to which **combination** of focus areas is useful. It is advisable to do this **in consultation with** representatives of municipalities and social organisations.

In addition to the financial system, flanking policies are also desirable in the form of **national agenda-setting** and embedding of exit programmes, describing the **active components** of the approach, disseminating **knowledge and expertise** of 'what works', and more **systematic use** of data.

Conclusion

The continuation of the subsidy scheme is currently the most desirable financial system for distributing the funds of the coalition agreement. This regulation has a stimulating function for the realisation of a full **nationwide network** of exit programmes and offers the possibility to reduce administrative burdens. It is advisable to optimise the structure of the subsidy scheme by including – a combination of – the aforementioned focus areas. In order **to secure a sustainable nationwide network**, flanking policies should be developed.

Part III Results or RUPS II

Finally, the evaluation focuses on the results achieved by RUPS II. To this end, we both studied the most recent annual progress reports and final reports on RUPS II, available at the Ministry of Justice and Security, and conducted telephone interviews with RUPS programme providers in 10 (out of 12) regions. A few **comments** are appropriate with regard to part III. It turned out that the quality of the information of the progress reports was too limited to be able to objectively evaluate the RUPS II results. Moreover, a comparison of results among exit programmes also proved impossible. If it is desirable to make such a comparison in the future, steps should be taken to ensure that results are accounted for in a more uniform manner. Wherever possible and useful, available figures have been converted into annual regional averages in order to nevertheless provide an **indication** of quantitative results. The results of RUPS II have been **deepened** through interviews with providers, and **potential active elements** of exit programmes have been identified.

Results

We consider the results of the exit programmes on the basis of a 'dimension of success': from reaching the intended target group to sex workers actually getting out of prostitution. Analogous to this, we divide the achieved results of RUPS II into three phases that can be distinguished in all exit programmes, namely reach and inflow, programme participation, and outflow and exit. On the basis of the figures that providers reported in the progress reports the average annual size of the total national inflow amounts to around 650 sex workers and exit numbers amount to around 300 sex workers. These

quantitative results must be interpreted in the light of the observed limitations regarding the quality of the data. The research results are therefore an indication of the results achieved by RUPS II. On the basis of the data, we cannot present total annual figures for participants who quit the programme prematurely and those who completed the programme in its entirety.

The interviews with the providers show that the inflow of sex workers is mostly achieved through physical and online fieldwork of the programme providers and cooperation partners. This concerns general outreach work, neither specifically aimed at certain subgroups, nor specifically aimed at exiting sex work. In practice, the programme inflow consists mainly of women. Once enrolled, exit programmes focus on tackling problems faced by sex workers, sometimes in various life areas. In order to offer appropriate support, the programmes work closely together with chain partners and municipalities. The progress reports show that in most regions the RUPS II providers positively value chain cooperation. Providers argue that in order to retain participants, various factors are important with regard to the use of momentum and keeping clients motivated. From the interviews and progress reports it appears that programmes are not always followed in a straight line: clients may drop out, lose their motivation, stop prematurely and return again.

Providers participating in the in-depth interviews also mentioned various potentially effective elements of exit programmes. Some elements **specifically** contribute to reach and inflow (e.g. field work at gender and sector-specific locations), others contribute to completing the support offer (e.g. 'warm' transfer to another health and welfare organisation) and others to outflow and exit (e.g. collaboration with job coaches / employers). In addition, a number of **generic**, potentially active elements were mentioned, such as, for example, easily accessible assistance, an integrated approach to problems and keeping clients motivated.

Conclusion

Based on the information of the progress reports provided by RUPS providers themselves, an indication can be given of the annual level of the total national inflow (around 650 sex workers) and exit numbers (around 300 sex workers). Given the quality of the data, this is an **indication**. To summarise, we conclude from the conversations that the success of exit programmes is potentially linked to 1) close **cooperation** with municipalities and chain partners, 2) a high degree of embedding in local structures of care and support, and 3) continued **involvement** with clients in all support phases, including periods of non-participation and loss of motivation. All exit programmes already focus on part of the potentially effective elements mentioned. All providers have further growth potential by putting more effort into one or more other elements.

Limitations of the evaluation

The results must be viewed in the light of a number of comments. In order to make an inventory of existing exit programmes, it was necessary to use a non-targeted questionnaire by means of a web survey that was brought to the attention of municipalities and programme providing organisations. As a result, it is not certain to what extent the recorded image of existing exit programmes is complete. Restrictions also apply to the research into possibilities for a future financial distribution system. For example, the acquired insights have mainly come about in a qualitative way and the extent to which they have been objectively supported or substantiated in figures is smaller. The latter also applies to the evaluation of the RUPS II results, which is due to the fact that the results in figures (from inflow to exit) envisaged by the Ministry of Justice and Security are not complete in the progress reports. One of the problems here is that the accountability format does not offer sufficient guidelines; another problem is that for some aspects it is highly questionable whether a uniform quantitative indicator is in fact possible.

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