

## VSE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2022

**10 May 2022, 14.00 – 18:00 CEST**  
**M.A Grima Hall, Mediterranean Conference Centre, Valletta**

### Minutes

KEY		
Geraldine Hanna	<b>GH</b>	President
Petra Klein	<b>PK</b>	Vice-President
Carmen Rasquete	<b>CR</b>	Treasurer
Levent Altan	<b>LA</b>	Executive Director
Aleksandra Ivankovic	<b>AI</b>	Deputy Director
Léa Meindre-Chautrand	<b>LMC</b>	Policy Officer
Annelies Blondé	<b>AB</b>	Junior Policy Officer
Marina Kazakova	<b>MK</b>	Communications Officer
Keti Varoshlija-Botterman	<b>KVB</b>	Junior Administrative Officer

#### Opening and Welcome

GH opened the Annual General meeting by welcoming everyone and expressing her gratitude to the Team, and to Victim Support Agency - Malta for sponsoring the venue and catering the event. She then announced her appointment as Victims of Crime Commissioner Designate for Northern Ireland and said that she would be leaving her role as Victim Support Europe President. The General Assembly accepted her resignation and took note of Geraldine HANNA's decision to end her mandate as President in June 2022.

The General Assembly agreed that the recruitment process for the President's position will take place over the next few months, with the view that the election and adoption of a new President will occur at the General Meeting in December. The Vice-Presidents and the Treasurer will oversee the responsibilities of the President in the interim.

**Minutes from the previous meeting:** members voted to approve the minutes from the last General Meeting of 2 December 2021.

**Victim Support Europe Monitoring and Evaluation:** the VSE Monitoring and Evaluation process has two focal points: monitoring the productivity and success of our activities; and evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of (the process used in) VSE's intervention strategy. In 2021, the

evaluation process concentrated on collecting members' views, by using a survey, on the work carried out by VSE. The following conclusions were drawn:

- Members view VSE's performance as effective; they see it as an active organisation and highlighted the use of tools such as the updated website, VSE's Online Hub and the Training Academy
- VSE plays a crucial role in supporting members, especially by screening funding opportunities, and providing regular newsletters and intranet updates
- VSE's strategy and its implementation show coherence and are aligned with members' perceptions
- Good levels of communication exist, BUT members indicated a need for more information about VSE's monitoring system

#### **MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Continuous investment in the monitoring system
- Creation and dissemination of a specific document/report explaining the monitoring system, the data collected, and how it could be used in the organisation's work
- Increased communication on and sharing of projects' results and achievements
- Consolidation of the VSE Hub & Training Academy
- Continued cooperation with the European Commission to increase advocacy opportunities and increase the visibility of VSE's work

#### **Overview of VSE membership, and a short introduction of new members & pending applications**

LA presented the latest VSE associate member, with the support of its representative:

- Restorative Justice and Rehabilitation Centre in Georgia (RJRC)

Pending Applications

- Finn Nørgaard Association (Denmark)
- Law & Internet Foundation (Bulgaria)
- Vilnius Institute for Advanced Studies (Lithuania)

#### **Presentation of new VSE Staff Members**

AI presented the two interns: Ruben Dos Santos, who joined the Communications and Training team, and Juliana Senra, supporting the Project and Policy team.

#### **Presentation of the Governance Policy & Code of Conduct for the Executive Board**

KVB presented the VSE Governance Policy and Code of Conduct for the Executive Board, the main purpose of which is to define the mechanism or systems of rules, practices and interaction points by

which governance is implemented at VSE. The aim is to provide all Board Members with guidance on their decision-making, accountability and general conduct.

### **Presentation of VSE Ethical Partnership Policy**

AI presented the new Ethical Partnership paper, the aim of which is to guide VSE's sponsorship activities, outlining how sponsorships and other funding relationships would be carried out. VSE will therefore: ensure that all arrangements add value and support the achievement of the organisation's vision, be transparent in funding agreements, ensure defined criteria to determinate funding agreements, and identify new funding opportunities.

### **Presentation of VSE Donation Policy**

AI presented the VSE Donation Policy paper that covers the solicitation, acceptance, recording, oversight, and reporting requirements related to any donations and gifts received by VSE

### **Presentation of VSE Financial Regulations, Policies and Processes**

AI emphasised that VSE is currently developing appropriate Financial Regulations and Processes; in the second half of the year, VSE intends to develop an Investment Policy. The Financial Procedures will cover:

- Accounting and auditing processes
- Budget management
- Purchase and procurement policies
- Cash/bank management policies and procedures
- Income oversight
- Update of VSE travel policies
- Financial project management policy

### **Presentation of working groups**

LMC presented the creation of working groups for specific topics, which results from a VSE strategic priority to improve its ability to engage with members on a more consistent basis. The working groups will increase members' involvement; members will be encouraged to select staff, who are specialists in their field, to create groups of experts.

### **Update - Policy & Advocacy planning**

LMC stated that the focus of policy and advocacy activities is on the Victims' Rights Directive Revision by means of advocacy meetings, membership consultations, EU public consultations, and model provision paper.

The Policy and Advocacy Team has been developing two policy papers: one, on Safe Justice, has already been presented to and discussed by the board, which is now in the process of reviewing it; the second is the National Support Framework Paper and the Model Provisions Paper.

LMC also presented VSE's submission on EU Consultations and encouraged members to submit their views on:

- Criminal justice – EU rules on victims' rights
- Effective Justice
- Modernising judicial cooperation between EU countries
- Fighting human trafficking
- Racial Equality Directive
- Pre-trial detention
- FRA's surveys

VSE is also working with the EFRJ on a joint position on restorative justice and victim support. Additionally, VSE is working on the Directive on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. A workshop on this topic will be held at the conference. The Team has also been working on Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation in response to an EU consultation on this topic, staff have attended workshops organised by the EC. The Human Trafficking Directive is a further item on the Advocacy and Policy Team's agenda. VSE is following the revision of the Council of Europe's Recommendations on Assistance to Victims as well as the UN's model legislative provisions to support and protect the rights and needs of victims of terrorism.

LMC underlined that 2022 is an important year for the Victims' Rights Directive Revision and highlighted its aims: to strengthen the Directive by improving its current chapters and articles; by providing more detail; by introducing new chapters on prevention, reporting, coordination, and new rights for victims; and insert new obligations for Member States.

AB gave a short presentation on VSE's thoughts, as contained in the Safe Justice paper, on victims' rights to access justice and victims' rights to protection in light of the new Victims' Rights Directive. AGM participants were invited to share their views.

**Presentation of update - Communications and Events Team planning**

MK introduced the Communications & Events Team activities; she spoke about the team's work in supporting VSE HQ staff through publicising and communicating events and papers via the web and regular newsletters. The team also supports VSE members by disseminating information on their activities and efforts in victims' rights. The key characteristics that summarise VSE's communications approach are consultation and involvement by members and victims in VSE's media campaigns and awareness raising efforts.

The team brings together the work of the Capacity Building and Advocacy and Policy Teams; They have established strong relationships with other strategic partners in the development of projects. Their main objectives for 2022 are mainstreaming victims' rights, building engagement with VSE's brand, and increasing support for VSE causes and campaigns.

The team's target audiences are policy makers, the victim support community, those unaware of the organisation and victims' rights, and those who do not agree with VSE's position on victims' rights (by developing persuasive factsheets to counter arguments). Their work also focuses on advocating for the full and effective implementation of existing EU legislation, in trying to influence the European Commission's proposals for the revision of certain EU laws, mainstreaming victims' rights and supporting members, at the national level, to communicate VSE's aims for 2022: the Revision of Victims' Rights Directive and initiating a new EU law to combat violence against women. VSE actively supports the global marketing agency, ICF, in the DG JUSTICE Victims' Rights Campaign. VSE has also established a Victims' Rights Communicators Network.

MK expressed VSE's gratitude to Weisser Ring who will host next year's conference, from 8 to 12 May 2023 in Germany.

### **Presentation of update - Capacity Building Team planning**

AI started the presentation with an update from the team supporting members in their response to the crisis in Ukraine: VSE reached out to all members, who have been asked for their thoughts, experiences, and practices while working with Ukrainian refugees. A web page, with various resources, has been set up, discussions among members have been initiated, and a webinar was organised on the Hub. Training, with the support of EMDR Europe – a VSE member, on supporting refugees and preventing vicarious trauma has been organised, VSE is now examining long term actions and trying to establish a means of permanent updates on events within Ukraine.

A Members' Management System has been developed: the aim is to centralise and collate members' concerns, to follow-up on the collaboration, and to communicate with members in compliance with GDPR.

The team organised a second Centre of Excellence meeting on distance support, which is to be held online at the end of May, a workshop that will take place in September in Stockholm is being organised.

VSE will host a workshop in Brussels for countries which do not have the 116 helpline; country representatives will meet VSE members who already provide this service to encourage them to set-up the helpline.

National Meetings will be convened as members have found them very useful as discussion opportunities with other stakeholders from their own countries.

The Team will also work to implement standards and accreditation

### **Presentation of update - Project Team planning**

VSE has a total of 13 ongoing projects (OG 2022, AREV, BeneVict, EUCVT, CREST, FYDO, COVIS, Chat for Victims, Breaking Barriers, InfoVictims, ICF campaign, PROTECT, ENABLE). In addition to these, reporting on 3 projects took place in 2022 (OF2021, PREVICT, EUCVT).

AI provided the timeline of the various projects :

- CREST: Sept 2019 – Mar 2023
- FYDO: Jan 2021 – Dec 2022
- INFOVICTIMS III : Jan 2021 – Dec 2022
- ENABLE: Jan 2021 – Dec 2022
- AREV: Mar 2021 - Mar 2023
- Breaking Barriers: Mar 2021 – Mar 2023
- PROTECT: Sep 2021 – Aug 2023

Two projects were approved and have started in 2022: the operating grant and the EUCVT Hub. EUCVT started in March and is set up to last three plus three months.

Three new projects will start in 2022: BeneVict, coordinated by VSE, aims to follow-up on the work of the VOIARE project by looking into the implementation of the Victims' Rights Directive. The project will reassess what has happened over the past few years and submit its findings to the Commission for consideration. The project includes training in advocacy and capacity building. Research on the

cost of providing support to victims will be carried out in four countries: Sweden, Estonia, Portugal and the Netherlands.

The second project is COVIS: an initiative to develop services in Sweden

Finally, Chat for Victims is a project awarded to VSE member Victims and Witness Support Service in Croatia: chat support for victims will be developed.

### **Presentation of update - Training and Hub planning**

LA stated that up till now VSE has been conducting training in several ways. To demonstrate and better organise VSE's prioritization of training, the Training Academy has been created to focus on face to face training and online training. Its goals are to achieve a fundamental shift in knowledge, culture and behaviour on victimisation issues, to be a leading international provider of victims-related training courses which can be accessed by professionals working with/and on the subject of victims of crime, to improve the services of those working with victims, and to increase public knowledge of victim-related issues.

VSE is working to improve the Training platform to be able to offer a private training area to its members.

### **Financial reporting**

CR informed the audience that unfortunately the Financial Audit has not been completed due to some minor issues. An online meeting will be organised in the following weeks to vote on the annual accounts. Nevertheless, CR presented the organisation's financial review and its developments mentioning that the numbers could slightly change following the final report; the 2021 overview will be made available on the Intranet. VSE's 2021 total income was an increase of 3 % and on expenditure. There has been a 34,7 % increase in reserves.

Expenditure for 2022 is estimated to increase by 20 %, with a positive surplus of 28,614 €. VSE was successful in increasing the level of its reserves to 44 %.

GH thanked everyone for their presentations and invited PK to provide the closing remarks.

PK expressed her gratitude to the members who contributed to the conference and who worked to provide a high quality service to victims. She thanked the Brussels' team for the organisation of the event. She underlined that VSE will increase member engagement, learning opportunities, and staff exchanges, and conduct policy advocacy and awareness raising activities. VSE intends to organise the

next annual conference. PK warmly thanked GH for her work as VSE President and wished her the best for her new position as Victims of Crime Commissioner Designate for Northern Ireland.