

VSE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

26th May 2021, 13.00 – 17.00 Brussels time

Held: ONLINE in Brussels

MINUTES

João Lazaro	JL	President
Levent Altan	LA	Executive Director
Petra Klein	PK	Treasurer
Keti Varoschlija Botterman	KVB	Administrative Assistant
Iris Lokerse	IL	Policy Assistant
Marina Kazakova	MK	Communications Officer
Léa Meindre-Chautrand	LMC	Policy Officer
Aleksandra Ivankovic	AI	Deputy Director
Antonio De Martin	ADM	Project Manager
Annelies Blondé	AD	Project Assistant
Sigal Haimov	SH	Volunteer

1. Opening and Welcome

President **João Lázaro** opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He gave an overview of the agenda.

2. Presentation of the Social hub

LA introduced VSE's Social Hub (VSH) and the objectives of the platform. The VSH will be a single platform leading the discussions on victims' rights and victim support issues, focusing on exchanging ideas and sharing knowledge. First open to VSE members only, its access will be extended and open to everyone working on victims' issues, from 2022 onwards. Using a poll, members expressed their interest to see trainings-related content on the hub.

SH presented the three main functionalities and activities of the hub: finding and connecting with other members and experts, developing knowledge on victims' rights and needs and informing others about your activities in the field of victims. Using polls, a majority of members (92%) expressed their wish to see the first VSH webinar hosted at the beginning of September, on the topic of victim support related issues and the improvement of the services provided.

AB presented VSE's social hub, showing the following features:

- **Landing page:** information about the hub, registration button
- **Activity page:** view own and other members' activities
- **Profile page:** personal data, of which you can choose who can see you work/interests
- **Members page:** members' list with access to each member's profile
- **Group meetings:** ability to create public, private or hidden groups to discuss specific topics. Ability to share documents, photos and create Zoom meetings linked to the group
- **Forum:** possibility to start discussions on specific topics
- **Documents** (all, per group and personal)
- **Blog:** purpose to be used as online journal, showcase important developments, activities,...
- **Events:** showcasing upcoming events
- **News feed:** all recent activity of members and yourself
- **Messages:** to directly discuss with another hub member

JL further commented that VSE's hub will not replace Intranet, it will mostly facilitate communication as a complementation to Intranet.

LA presented the training academy as part of VSE's social hub. The goal is for VSE, and other members, to provide training for all the Hub's participants, thereby creating a place where one can find all the training related to victim-related issues. The platform will allow members to create their own programme with different formats available: modules, full training programmes, live programmes, with the possibility to integrate a certification. VSE is currently working on a business model for the training programmes.

3. VSE 2020 Activity Report

Minutes from the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous AGM (December 2020) were approved.

Presentation and approval of Financial report and Annual Accounts

Presented by PK

2020 – Financial Report

INCOME: Total Income is €881,519, which represents an increase of 32.5% compared to 2019. This is largely due to the EU Centre of Expertise on victims of terrorism Contract, which ends in 2021. However, VSE has won a number of projects running in 2022 which will help mitigate financial risks.

EXPENDITURE: VSE expenditure in 2020 was € 828,584. This is an increase of 22% compared to 2019. In 2020, a range of activities under the operating grant were carried out online or were cancelled due to Covid-19 related restrictions.

Summary of Operating and Action Grants: Most of VSE's current projects entail some level of contribution from VSE, however, others such as CREST, are 100% funded. Several of these projects will run across one or more financial years. The percentage spend indicated in this table represents spend of the total budget. The remaining budget for projects will be used in subsequent years with the expect of near 100% usage. As you can see, despite last year's difficulties we still managed to achieve a 95% spend with our operating grant.

CONCLUSION: In 2020, VSE's only contract was for the running of the EUCVT. In 2021, we already have a number of contracts signed and underway which will support financial sustainability. To conclude on this section, based on the current income and expenditure as determined by our accounting, we anticipate to have a surplus of 26,767 euros in 2020.

RESERVES: By the end of 2020, the level of the VSE's reserves is € 222,377. This represents a 14% increase in our reserves from 2019, which showcases an important progress since VSE committed to move towards a reserve level of €223,500. We are therefore close to that objective. Just to remind everyone, this level was based on an estimate of reserves needed to continue VSE operations for 6 months at gradually reducing levels of staffing. VSE set a 2021 aim to achieve this reserves level. It is furthermore also worth noting that the 223k reserve level is based on VSE having no identified future income. VSE has a number of contracts and projects signed for 2021 and 2022, so these reserves would not be required even if, for example, we were unsuccessful with our operating grant proposal.

2020 - Audit Report and annual accounts

VSE received a clean and unqualified audit report from our auditors, Crowe, Callen, Pienne & Co. They reported a balance sheet total at the end of 2019 of €1,491.838 and a surplus of € 26,767. They have provided reasonable assurance that as a whole, the accounts are free from material misstatements whether due to fraud or error.

2021 – April 2021 Finance Position

INCOME: Total Income is €1,200,221, which represents an increase of 36% compared to 2020 - largely due to the EU Centre of Expertise and the AREV Project. The EU Centre of Expertise contract ends in 2021, however, VSE has won a number of projects running in 2022 which will help mitigate financial risks.

EXPENDITURE: VSE expenditure until 30th April 2021 is € 203,289. We anticipated that VSE expenditure at the end of 2021 is € 1,011,050, which would represent an increase of 22% compared to 2020.

Summary of Operating and Action Grants (2021): Most of VSE's current projects entail some level of contribution from VSE, however, others such as CREST, are 100% funded. A number of projects will run across one or more financial years. The percentage spend indicated in this table represents spend of the total budget. The remaining budget for projects will be used in subsequent years with the expect of near 100% usage. As you can see, despite the difficulties with the COVID restrictions, we still try to achieve a 95% spend with our operating grant.

CONCLUSION: In 2021, we will have 2 ongoing contracts, namely for the running of the EUCVT and for ICF. To conclude on this section, based on the anticipated income and expenditure, we anticipate to have a surplus of 107,709 euros in 2021.

RESERVES: By the end of 2021, we anticipate that the level of the VSE's reserves will be € 330,086, which represents an 48% increase in our reserves from 2020. This is an important progress since VSE committed to move towards a reserve level of €223,500. We are therefore going to reach that objective, which places us in a very strong financial position in 2021, and likely also in 2022. VSE is also taking forward further actions to diversify and increase unrestricted income.

KVB conducted the voting for the approval of the financial report. According to the constitution, all full members have a vote. As there are 12 full members attending today's AGM, the majority for today's voting is 7. KVB showcased the results of the election: 11 full members voted yes, thereby approving the financial report and annual accounts.

Presentation of new VSE Members

IL presented the three new members of VSE.

- Victim Support at Court at Republic of Ireland (V-SAC)
- Skalbē (Crisis and counselling service in Latvia)
- Child Rights Centre Albania (CRCA)

Activity report 2020 (based on Annual report 2020)

MK presented the activity report of 2020, based on the Annual report of 2020. These activities included:

- 1 EU NGO round table
- 1 Annual Conference
- 2 members' meetings
- 1 regional exchange event
- Staff exchange for 6 persons
- 4 Executive Board meetings
- 4 Management Team meetings
- 1 external audit report
- 1 external evaluation report
- 3 workshops
- 1 policy paper
- 1 training
- 4 campaigns
- 1 annual report
- 4 newsletters

Additionally, VSE continues to regularly update its digital knowledge database on a monthly basis and to support the functioning of its cross-border referral mechanism.

There has been a strengthening of VSE's capacity and an increased sharing of knowledge, including the sharing of best practices and experiences related to the Covid-19 pandemic. There have been several active working groups that hosted meetings to develop VSE's strategy for 2020-2025. Next to this, VSE organized a workshop for the Centre of Excellence and organized an EU NGO roundtable meeting.

VSE is actively responding to the European Commission's roadmaps and consultations. It has published two position papers, on data protection and how to navigate through the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and on the position paper of the EU-wide 116006 helplines for victims of crime.

MK announced the publication of VSE's Annual report 219. According to the survey conducted for the Annual Report, 1,2 million victims were helped during 2020. Furthermore, VSE has launched four social

media campaigns. Finally, VSE has continuously been posting various funding opportunities, facilitating the access of our members to these funding opportunities.

4. Brief update on VSE work 2021

VSE Organisational structure

LA presented the organizational structure of VSE. During this presentation, he mentioned the expansion of the staff at VSE's head office. The work structure within the office developed to a 'work per department' structure, in which the staff is more and more specializing in certain areas, such as advocacy, policy, projects,... **LA** further explained the content and knowledge advancement, as VSE's communication to the external world is further improving. However, communications between VSE and its members should be further improved, through for example the organization of webinars on a regular basis.

VSE is currently seeking to increase its partnership with the private sector, taking the example of the company Elastik.

Policy and advocacy

LMC presented VSE's policy and advocacy activities.

Regarding the advocacy activities, VSE responded to 10 EU consultations, on various topics such as gender-based violence, child sexual abuse and hate crime. VSE's main focus regarding these consultations has been on mainstreaming victim-related issues, which mainly includes ensuring the implementation of Victims' Rights Directive (Directive 2012/29/EU) and other relevant EU policies.

The Victims' Rights Platform, led by European Union Coordinator for Victims' Rights, brings together all relevant actors working on victims' rights (34 members at the moment). As a preparatory meeting to the Victims' Rights Platform, VSE organises the EU NGO roundtables. Here, close partners are encouraged to discuss coordinated actions on related topics to present these at the EU Victims' Rights Platform meeting.

Furthermore, VSE works in a close and active collaboration with several Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), notably providing amendments on specific legislation. At the same time, an increasing number of MEPs are contacting VSE directly for advices or consultations, such as on the evaluation of the Victims' Rights Directive and of the Counter-Terrorism Directive. VSE has established close contact with the EU Council Portuguese presidency as well and is currently preparing its engagement with the next presidencies (Slovenia and France respectively)

LMC presented VSE's two policy papers published in 2020: on the 116 006 victims of crime helpline and on online data protection. In 2021, VSE is planning to publish three more policy papers, namely on communication with victims, safe justice and the development of a national framework for victim support.

Communication

MK presented VSE's communications activities. VSE's communication priorities lay with its four priorities, namely hate crime, cybercrime, terrorism and gender-based violence, and victims' rights in general.

MK further explains that the communication strategy is executed through featuring VSE's policy work, including policy papers and contributions to consultations in our communications editorials. VSE is currently developing its communication regarding projects, with separate communication plans. Furthermore, **MK** presented the 'You won't believe, but it exists' campaign, which was launched and is ongoing on social media. VSE collaborates with 13 partners, featuring 8 information films that showcase problems with accessing a specific victim's right, how a victim found a solution and presents the national victim support service for that member State.

Next to this, **MK** presented VSE's communication plan for 2021's deliverables. This year, VSE aims to produce its Communications Plan for 2021 – 2025, to provide a regular news flow (30 articles on the website, over 100 posts in social media), to maintain VSE's social hub, to publish the Annual Report 2020, to conduct 3 social media campaigns (22 February – International Victims' Day, 21 August – Victims of Terrorism; accompanying EC's autumn information campaign), to produce 8 short animation films within the above-mentioned campaigns, to produce 4 newsletters and, finally, to provide publicity to VSE ongoing projects within the projects communications strategy.

Events and capacity building

AI presented VSE's international staff exchange, which will be possible for at least 6 staff members. VSE is further planning to have national meetings and regional exchanges, however, these will probably still occur online. VSE will use its social hub and Intranet to deliver and promote a number of activities this year.

In this regard, **LA** mentioned the necessity to further improve networking and member engagement.

Projects

AI presented VSE's 14 ongoing and confirmed projects, which in total sum up to almost 1 million euro dedicated for funding of projects.

VSE coordinated projects:

VSE OG 2021 funds all core activities, office, ...

PREVICT has been extended for seven months due to Covid-19. This project focuses on delivering information campaigns based on research and measuring the impact thereof.

FYDO has been kicked off in the beginning of this year. The project aims to develop and deliver a new service of victim support through facility dogs.

EUCVT is VSE's biggest project at the moment, both in terms of funding and work. The project aims to develop a number of tools to increase members' response to victims of terrorism, such as national handbooks, which will probably be delivered between June and October, and the training of trainers.

AREV is a new project and aims to advance the rights of Estonian victims through working with various stakeholders such as the police, hospitals, victim support services and prosecutors/judges. As the project runs as a pilot, VSE expects to see fast deliverables and hopes to be able to replicate this model in other Member States.

Projects coordinated by partners (VSE as partner):

ADM presented himself and the other projects.

CREST (Horizon 2020) is a project that aims to setup a prediction, prevention and investigation platform through an IoT-enabled autonomous platform based on an ecosystem of advanced intelligence, operations, and investigation technologies.

INHeRE focuses on the enhancement of migrants', applicants' of international protection and refugees' rights, as they are at high risk for sexual victimization.

Infovictims III, coordinated by APAV, is a follow up of Infovictims II and studies how we can improve the awareness on victims' rights.

PROTECT, coordinated by Association for Social Promotion, attempts to promote victims' rights through the implementation of restorative practices paths

Amplifying victims' voices, coordinated by Public Safety Canada, attempts to further enhance access to communication and information for victims/survivors.

Next to this, VSE's current service contracts with ICF were presented:

- Study on online identity theft and identity-related crime
- Study to support the evaluation of the Counter-terrorism Directive

Finally, **ADM** presented the pending proposals.

5. Re-election/Nominations of Executive Board Members

KVB explained that all nominations for the elections were sent in accordance to VSE's constitution, namely 2 weeks before AGM. KVB further presented all the nominees, who were given a few minutes to present themselves.

Geraldine Hanna was nominated for President (VSNI)

(She was not able to attend because of forced measures, the voting continued without her attendance.)

Petra Klein was nominated for Vice President (Weisser Ring Germany)

Carmen Rasquete was nominated for Treasurer (APAV PT)

Jérôme Moreau was nominated for Vice President (France Victimes)

Frida Wheldon was nominated for Board Member (Victim Support Sweden)

Rosa Jansen was nominated for Board Member (Slachtofferhulp NL)

Tobias Koertner was nominated for the re-election as Board Member (Weisser Ring Austria)

12 out of 17 full members were presented, thereby establishing the election's majority at 7. All members received a link to the voting, which was preformed via google forms.

KVB presented the election's results, all 12 full members that were present today have voted.

Geraldine Hanna: 12 votes in favour

Petra Klein: 12 votes in favour

Jérôme Moreau: 9 votes in favour, 1 abstention, 1 vote against

Carmen Rasquete: 12 votes in favour

Frida Wheldon: 12 votes in favour

Rosa Jansen: 12 votes in favour

Tobias Koertner: 10 votes in favour, 2 abstentions

LA congratulated the new Board and remarked that João will remain VSE's legal representative to sign documents, due to Belgian legislation on this matter. As soon as the new President, Geraldine Hanna, is recognised by the Belgium government, she will become the legal representative.

6. Any other business - Closing Remarks

LA closed the AGM and presented his farewell speech to João.