



**Victim Support**  
Europe



**BRIDGING  
HIGH-TECH  
AND  
VICTIM SUPPORT  
SERVICES**

Victim Support Europe  
Annual Conference 2020  
ONLINE 19 November

**2020**

# Annual report.



# WHO WE ARE

Victim Support Europe (VSE) is the leading European umbrella organisation that advocates on behalf of all victims of crime, no matter what the crime, no matter who the victim.

VSE represents 61 national member organisations, providing support and information services to more than 2 million people affected by crime every year in 31 countries.

Since its foundation in 1990, VSE has worked on behalf of all European - and global - victims to ensure their rights and services, whether they have reported a crime or not.

We work through advocacy to achieve our mission of improving EU and international laws related to victims' rights, using research, knowledge development, and capacity building at the national and local level.

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# 01. FROM THE PRESIDENT



In 2020, Victim Support Europe marked its 30th anniversary as a European network dedicated to ensuring that all victims of crime - no matter what crime, no matter where in Europe it took place - can access the rights they are entitled to and get the support they need.

From humble beginnings as group of like-minded professionals and organisations wanting to change the victims' field for the better, VSE has grown into a large non-profit organisation with a global membership of 61 organisations, supporting over 2 million victims of crime per year.

The founding of the European movement of victim support that led to Victim Support Europe was a process, not a moment. It took years to establish the many national support services and projects that we now associate with VSE. Not only have we seen the establishment of support services, but

also a transformation of the rights of victims through international provisions at the level of the UN, COE, and EU.

Change hasn't been easy and has required the determined effort of thousands of people and organisations across the world.

By 2020, we have reached a certain point in recognizing the necessity of victim support services, they underpin countless beneficial changes in the lives of millions of victims across the world. But we still have a long way to go. Implementing, protecting, and promoting victims' rights is a long-term "work in progress".

Let us start this new decade by seizing the initiative and making sure it is a decade of action for victims.

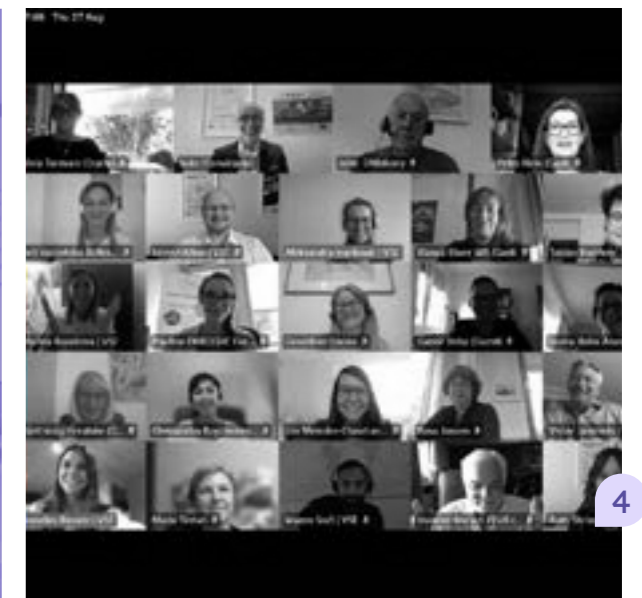
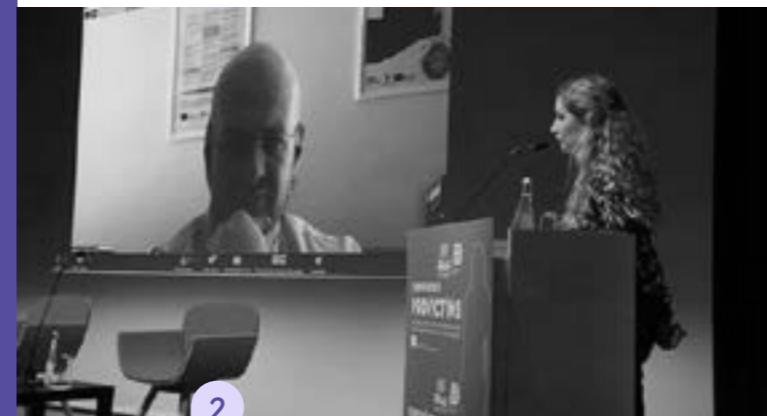
Every voice makes a difference, every action builds momentum and pressure for change.



1. "Judicial Assistance Dog" («Chien d'Assistance Judiciaire») colloquium held at the Ministry of Justice in Paris, organised by the Fondation Adrienne et Pierre Sommer and France Victimes
2. PROVICTIMS conference
3. A training course specifically designed by #VictimSupportEurope for professionals working in a law enforcement environment in Malta ('Victims of Hate Crime Project')
4. VSE Online AGM, September 2020

## VSE 2020 IN PICTURES

# 02.





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- 5. The online summer course hosted by Academy of European Law ERA (ERA)
- 6. The Commissioner for Justice Didier Reynders with victims support organisations in Brussels
- 7. Webinar on the first-ever #EUVictimsRights Strategy
- 8. The 7th International and 11th Biennial Conference of the Indian Society of Victimology
- 9. The Conference of INGOs celebrating #WorldNGODay
- 10. The final conference of the project #VICToRIIA (Best Practices in Victims' Support: #Referrals, #Information, #IndividualAssessment)



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- 11. VSE's Deputy Director Aleksandra Ivankovic spoke at the Parliament of the Portuguese Republic on the importance of victim support services
- 12. PREVICT (Promoting Rights of Victims in the EU) Project meeting in Portugal
- 13. Counter@ct project coordination meeting in Spain
- 14. A meeting with The Security and Crisis Centre by the European Jewish Congress (SACC by EJC) do discuss our future collaboration to improve the safety and preparedness of Jewish communities across Europe

# 03. OVERVIEW OF 2020

## OBJECTIVES 2020:

1. Advance improvements in laws and policies.
2. Pursue compliance with existing laws and policies.
3. Raise awareness of victims' issues.
4. Enable improvements in quality and accessibility of services.
5. Support coordination and delivery of cross border services.
6. Strengthen VSE collective capability.
7. Develop VSE operational capacity.
8. Enhance financial resilience.

## THEMATIC PRIORITIES FOR THE YEAR

Ongoing priority: this year new webpages with practical advice for specific types of victims, including victims of cybercrime, have been developed. These pages provide information on victims' rights, on identifying and reporting a crime, on contacting an organisation for assistance in the event of a crime, on appropriate post-crime support as well as information on current EU cybercrime policies.

Cybercrime

We have improved cross-border referrals not only between member organisations, for whom we ran a workshop on our new online cross-border referral system, but also between other stakeholders. Our activities support the implementation of the EU Victims' Directive on cross-border victims, and improvements in the implementation of the Compensation Directive for victims of cross-border crime.

Terrorism

Our activities related to the support of victims of terrorism contributed to the implementation of Directive (EU) 2017/541 of the European Parliament, and of the Council of 15 March 2017, on combating terrorism (the EU Terrorism Directive).

Our objective is to achieve a better understanding of victims' issues and the needs of our members. We ran an awareness-raising campaign 'One Voice, One Cause', which featured, among others, victims of hate crime.

Hate crime

### Enforcement of rights

Our activities ensured the provision of a comprehensive review of the EU 'acquis' of rights related to victims of crime, and formulated recommendations for EU measures to improve rights for all victims in the EU. Further analysis of the EU Victims' Directive and Council Directive 2004/80/EC focused on how victims were impacted by non-compliance of the directive, by challenges in its implementation, and by use of good practices. VSE's continuous support to the EU, and national governments, in the implementation of the Victims' Directive has ensured that victims can exercise their rights and access support services in all Member States.

VSE supports enforcement by providing evidence and encourages compliance by gathering and sharing information, advice, and good practices. VSE also supports the EU Commission on the EU Victims' Rights Strategy and the Gender Equality Strategy.

### Data Protection

The enactment of the General Data Protection Regulation (the GDPR) in 2018, has had a significant impact on support organisations. VSE has produced a paper focusing on victim support and data protection to help its members safely navigate GDPR, whilst ensuring victims' services. The paper aims to initiate discussion, at the European level, on GDPR from the perspective of civil society service providers, to explore problems arising from its implementation and interpretation, and to examine potential European and national solutions.

## OUR WORK FOR VICTIMS

This year we spent time on improving information for victims, and on connecting victims to national support organisations.

### Practical advice for specific types of victims

10 new webpages for specific types of victims were launched. These pages provide information on victims' rights, on how to identify and how to report a crime, on who to contact for assistance in the event of a crime, on appropriate support after a crime, as well as information on current EU policies related to these topics.

### Practical advice for victim support professionals

A 'Working for Victims' webpage, designed for professionals, who regularly meet victims of crime was also launched.

### New Information Page for Victims and Victim Support Professionals about COVID-19

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Europe, Victim Support Europe committed to supporting individuals and organisations and to providing relevant information. Our dedicated Covid-19 webpage ensures victims continue to receive support during the pandemic. It includes: general information on COVID-19 as well as on coronavirus-related crime, it provides advice for victims of domestic violence, resources for the provision of distance support services, and much more.

### Victim Engagement

VSE listened to victims by engaging in further victim interviews and testimonies, projects and campaigns.

## OUR WORK WITH MEMBERS

This year we aimed to improve our communication and engagement with members, and to strengthen our programme of member-centric events.

In 2020, VSE launched a new intranet for the victim support community, which will act as the mainstay of communication within, and between, its structures – VSE headquarters, management team, executive board and member organisations.

Intranet

From the new intranet homepage, the VSE network can see the latest announcements and updates on developments in the victims' rights field. The intranet hosts a contact database – a people directory, a Knowledge Database digital library of 600+ articles, and a referral mechanism to guide victims through the support service system.

The first national meeting took place in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on 4 March 2020, hosted by the Slovenian Ministry of Justice, and attended by VSE Executive Director, Levent Altan. The meeting brought together major Slovenian stakeholders to discuss how to achieve full implementation of the Victims' Rights Directive in Slovenia.

National Meetings

The second national meeting took place online, in December 2020 and was co-hosted by the Croatian Ministry of Justice and Zenska Soba, coordinator of NGO victim support in Croatia, both members of VSE. The meeting was convened within the framework of the national conference on victims' rights.

The VSE Centre of Excellence met 3 times online and participants expressed interest in the following workshops: good practices from the COVID crisis; online support; and training of helpline staff.

After members had agreed to move forward with the development of a VSE position paper on the harmonised European helpline 116 006 for victims of crime, VSE representatives presented a draft version of the 116 006 position paper and gathered participants' feedback and comments.

Centre of Excellence online meetings

In 2020, due to the global public health crisis, an online regional knowledge exchange was hosted by VSE, with the support of our member NATAL. Participants from 7 different countries came together to focus on The Capacity and Resiliency of Helplines, During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic. The meeting addressed the different regional approaches across Europe and facilitated an exchange of knowledge and good practices between participants.

Regional Meetings

## Workshops & Webinars

- In June 2020, VSE conducted an online cross-border referral system workshop.
- In July 2020, a week after the publication of the first ever EU Strategy on Victims' Rights, VSE organised a webinar to discuss the document, its impact and practical implementation. The webinar was co-hosted by Ms Saskia Bricmont (MEP Greens/EFA), and Commissioner Reynders delivered the keynote speech. Speakers from different institutions and organisations gave their views on the Strategy and potential common action plans.
- The 2020 Centre of Excellence Workshop on 116006 Helpline and Support at a Distance was held online, via Microsoft Teams, due to the health restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Training

In May 2020, VSE organised the training for its members on the topic of helplines during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were able to exchange thoughts on the challenges and solutions associated with running a helpline for victims during a health crisis.

# COMMUNICATIONS AND CAMPAIGNS

Our communication activities increased this year

## 22 Feb Campaign

VSE launched the first phase of its #OneVoiceOneCause social media campaign to coincide with the European Day for Victims of Crime on 22nd February 2020. Each day of the campaign explained the law and its practical application for different victim groups. The campaign featured the findings of the Vociare project and showcased videos in which project partners explained good practices and the most pressing victims' rights challenges in their respective countries. VSE and its partners issued a joint statement on the #onevoiceonecause campaign.

## 21 July Campaign

In July 2020, VSE launched the 2nd phase of its OneVoiceOneCause campaign, which lasted until November 2020. The campaign explains how proposed EU Strategy measures should be effectively and practically applied to support the development of victim support services.

## 21 August Campaign

International Day for Victims of Terrorism.

## Multimedia work

Developed infographics, explainer video, new website.

## Videoing of events

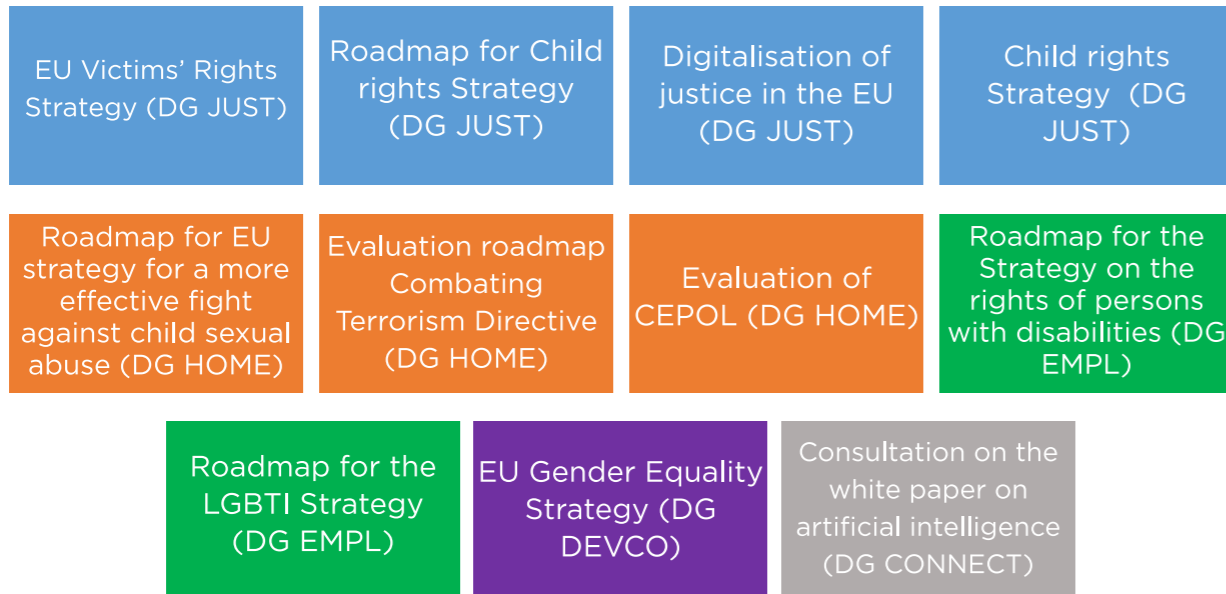
Increased interviewing and videoing of events, workshops, training events etc. to help spread knowledge.

## PR campaigns to support our events

In 2020, we aimed to increase media coverage of our events and commemoration of important dates (22 February, 21 August). The aim of these PR activities is to increase VSE's digital footprint, to ignite engagement with our projects and victim related endeavors, and in the implementation of victims' rights in every member state.

## CONTRIBUTING TO LAW-MAKING THROUGH PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS AND GIVING FEEDBACK

VSE responded to 11 EU consultations in 2020



## OUR GLOBAL WORK

Whilst victims' rights in Europe remains VSE's priority, in an interconnected world with a global membership, VSE continues to promote rights and strengthen services worldwide

### United Nations

Increased work with the UNODC and the UN's Counter Terrorism office to promote rights for all victims and to support policies for victims of terrorism.

VSE participated in the following UN-led events:

- Expert Consultation on Model Provisions Regarding Victims of Terrorism
- Launch of Glossary on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
- UN official commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women
- Addressing Emerging Human Trafficking Trends and Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic-Webinar
- International Day of Remembrance of, and Tribute to, the Victims of Terrorism and Launch of the UNODC publication "From victims of terrorism to messengers for peace: a strategic approach"

### Victim Support Asia

In 2018, VSE helped established its sister network – Victim Support Asia. VSE supports VS Asia's further development in recruiting new members and exploring how to strengthen or establish national services.

### The Indian society of Victimology

VSE was a participant at the India Victimology Conference 2020.

### Terrorism

VSE has global partnerships with organisations supporting victims of terrorism. International connections in Africa, the Middle East, USA, Canada, Australia, and India were consolidated, in 2020, thus improving our response capabilities after mass scale attacks affecting European citizens.

VSE is an active member of the INVICTM group, participating in regular conference calls and strategic meetings.



# 04.

## VSE 2020 FACTBOX

### VSE Victims Statistics 2020

Although Victim Support Europe's statistics 2020 tells its story in numbers, the consequences are human. In these pages, behind every number is a person, a family, a community: we hope governments, victim support services, health providers, civil society organisations, the media and others will use these numbers to promote victims' rights, to develop comprehensive victim support systems, keep communities safe, and protect the vulnerable.

The report covers 61 global victim support services and indicates the number of crime victims in receipt of organizational support. While the findings do not show the whole picture of how victims, affected by crime, were able to access help, it demonstrates that it is the NGOs, such as those highlighted in the report, which encourage victims to report the crimes, find help, and make their voices heard.

### Number of victims supported by VSE members in 2020

The number of victims reaching support services has been rising for many years. In 2020, between January and the end of June, there was an increase of 6% in the total number of victims reaching support services. The number of clients using the 116 006 helpline, during the first 6 months of 2020, increased by 64 % compared to the same period last year.

NUMBER OF VICTIMS SUPPORTED BY VSE  
MEMBERS IN 2020:

2,100,000  
VICTIMS OF CRIME

### VSE Publications and Events 2020

This year VSE produced the following publications:

- A paper focused on victim support and data protection. The paper aims to help VSE members safely navigate GDPR, whilst ensuring victims' services.
- A position paper on the importance of establishing functional 116 006 helplines in all EU Member States. The paper was written in close cooperation with members of VSE's Centre of Excellence and is based on extensive desk research, surveys, and interviews on the operation of a variety of helplines, including those for victims, around the world.
- ECJ/ECHR case law report 2020.

VSE held the following events:

- VSE Annual Autumn Conference in Brussels
- Brussels-based EU NGO Round Table
- 1 Regional Exchange Event
- 2 National Meetings
- 3 Centre of Excellence meetings
- 10+ workshops and training sessions
- 4 Executive Board meetings
- 4 Management Team meetings

# OVERVIEW OF VICTIM SUPPORT EUROPE ACTIVITIES 2020

## 05.

The needs of our members and victims are at the core of everything VSE does. We offer various activities that encourage the victim support community's work. These activities form part of our strategic plan, which is developed in collaboration with our membership (currently 61 organisations in 31 countries). The activities have a practical focus, and reflect the progress made by VSE in achieving the objectives of its current Strategic Plan (2016-2020).

Our 2020 activities include, but are not limited to:

- Exchanging best practices
- Organising online conferences and other opportunities for networking
- Developing policy input: including consultations, policy briefs and papers, and position papers
- Advocating and lobbying for victims' rights at the international and European levels
- Disseminating information
- Managing the network
- Ensuring a responsible governance and operating structure

### 5.1 Developing knowledge, collaborations and partnerships

#### 5.1.1 Developing knowledge

##### A position paper on the importance of establishing functional 116 006 helplines in all EU Member States

In 2020, VSE prepared a position paper on the importance of establishing functional 116 006 helplines in all EU Member States. The paper was written in close cooperation with members of VSE's Centre of Excellence and is based on extensive desk research, surveys, and interviews on the operation of a variety of helplines, including those for victims, around the world.

The paper calls on the EU and all Member States to establish and operate 116 006 helplines, to run the helplines under minimum operational requirements and minimum quality standards.

##### Report on the implementation of the Victims' Rights Directive

VSE produced a report on a tool to determine the needs of victims requiring protection from secondary or repeat victimisation, intimidation, and retaliation during criminal proceedings. The report proposes a roadmap for the implementation of Article 22 of the Victims' Rights Directive.



## A paper with a focus on victim support and data protection

Many victim support organisations operate in fear of potential GDPR non-compliance fines. A clear operating framework – based on legal certainty – must be developed and sanctions for non-compliance must consider data protection and victim support objectives, recognising the vulnerable financial situation of most organisations. Sanctions should promote change and improvement, not result in the loss of critical services or the ineffective operation of those services.

This paper aims to help our members safely navigate GDPR, while ensuring the services for their victims. It looks to initiate a discussion, at the European level, on the operation of GDPR from the perspective of civil society service providers, to explore problems arising from its implementation and interpretation, and to examine possible European and national solutions.



## ECJ/ECHR case law reports

VSE carried out regular monitoring checks of CJEU and ECHR case law to identify judgments relevant to the field of victims' rights. A detailed report for 19 cases, combining relevant case law and detailing the facts and legal reasoning, was prepared and disseminated to members through the VSE intranet. VSE also worked with its members to identify strategically important national case law.



## 5.1.2 Developing collaborations and partnerships

### I. Working with EU institutions

At the EU level, we were involved in many advocacy initiatives. While the work of the European Union might seem removed from many citizens, decisions taken by these institutions directly impact victims' lives. Over the last year, VSE has broadened and intensified its work with European actors and key partners include: the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Economic Social Committee, the European Committee of the Regions, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, and the European Institute of Gender Equality as well as EEAS, Europol, Eurojust, and CEPOL.

VSE was in continuous contact with representatives from the European Commission on a range of subjects, but especially on the implementation of EU legislation for victims' rights and for victims of terrorism. VSE highlighted concerns, including those raised by members, and shared good practices with the Commission.

In addition to legislative action, we prioritised the development of policy advice, much of which has focused on meetings and presentations on the core needs of victims and the role of victim support. VSE has been particularly active in responding to the Commission's calls for consultation and roadmaps.

In 2020, our advocacy work with the European Commission and the European Parliament included:

- Conducting regular meetings with the assistants of MEPs;
- Preparing amendments for reports on the implementation of the Directive (human trafficking and the resolution on the Security Strategy);
- Attending EP hearings and committee meetings;
- Working on specific advocacy factsheets subjects (hate crime, victims' rights strategy, etc.);
- Meeting with various EU Coordinators (child rights, human trafficking, etc.) at the European Commission to discuss future cooperation and common working priorities;
- Continuing our close cooperation with Council of Europe.

Despite the travel restrictions, VSE staff members were able to attend, and actively participate in, numerous major online events and conferences. The VSE Executive Director took part in several meetings including: the EU High Level Expert Panel on Victims' Rights, an Expert meeting of the Council of Europe on the Revising Recommendation Rec (2006)8 on assistance to crime victims, an EIGE conference, EStAR project conference, and Victims' Rights Platform meetings.

## II. International engagements

VSE's advocacy work not only focuses on EU Member States, but also takes place across the world.

### VSE and the United Nations

We now have close relations with various units of the United Nations, including:

1. UNODC: we support the revision of the UN's manual on the Implementation of the Basic Principles of Justice.
2. UN Counter Terrorism Office: we

participate in groups of experts to develop a manual of good practices on supporting victims of terrorism in the Middle East and Africa, and a similar manual for Asia.

3. UN's first Victims' Advocate - Jane Connors: we support the Advocate's work through participation in her working group.

### Victim Support Asia (VSA)

Following the establishment of Victim Support Asia in 2018, VSE has continued assisting VSA in bringing together organisations and institutions working for victims in Asia. VSE participated in VSA board meetings and helped with the preparation for VSA's 2021 Annual Conference.

### VSE and VSA's response to the Vienna Shootings

Victim Support Europe works tirelessly to ensure that all victims, foreign and national, receive appropriate information and support in the aftermath of a terrorist attack, and that victim support organisations are connected and able to refer victims to the right service. VSE facilitates the exchange of information, knowledge, and expertise between victim support organisations and individual experts around the world.

In 2020, VSE responded to the Vienna shooting, 2 November 2020, by:

- contacting its member organisation in Austria, Weisser Ring, to offer support and gather information on victim helplines;
- contacting the Terrorism Response Network with initial details of the attack;
- gathering resources from experts and victim support organisations on topics such as: how to talk about terrorist attacks with children, what to do in case of a terrorist attack, PTSD, how to recover, etc. All documents were shared with Victim Support Austria and posted on the VSE intranet;

Wenn möglich bleiben Sie daheim.

Meiden Sie die Innenstadt.

Es herrscht morgen keine Schulpflicht in Wien.\*

\* Die Schulen sind für die Betreuung geöffnet



# INVICTM

## International Network Supporting Victims of Terrorism and Mass Violence

- contacting The Management Center for Victim Support in Austria to offer assistance;
- providing members and the general public with practical updates: helplines, important web-resources, and contacts.

### INVICTM - International Network Supporting Victims of Terrorism and Mass Violence

Each year, INVICTM - International Network Supporting Victims of Terrorism and Mass Violence, holds its international symposium on Supporting Victims of Terrorism, which precedes VSE's Annual Conference.

Due to the pandemic, this year's symposium was cancelled, but VSE was still active in the INVICTM member group and regularly participates in its conference calls and strategic meetings.





## EU NGO Round Table Meeting Online, 2 December 2020

### III. VSE's collaboration with European NGOs EU NGO Round Table

This year, VSE collaborated with several international NGO networks and agencies involved in victim support. Collaboration included organising a well-attended roundtable discussion, which enabled those sharing a common commitment to victims of crime in Europe, to connect and to identify future partnership opportunities between the EC and NGOs at European and national levels.

In 2020, representatives from European NGOs, advocating for the most vulnerable in society, met on 2 December, to discuss common advocacy activities and priorities, and future cooperation with the European Commission's Victims' Rights Platform. Rights Strategy. All organisations were active in responding to numerous European Commission consultations, including the Victims' Rights Strategy, the Gender Equality Strategy, the Child Rights Strategy, the LGBTI Equality Strategy, and the European Disability Rights Strategy, etc.

Participants agreed to regular meetings, via the NGO Round Table, in preparation for the Victims' Rights Platform meetings, to provide updates on specific topics, and to coordinate on certain topics. A point raised by participants was that NGOs must show solidarity at the Platform level, to ensure that all our voices are heard at the Platform level, especially during thematic meetings, when not all NGOs might be in attendance.

Development of stronger links with European NGOs and other organisations.

Participants shared their activities, and priorities, in the field of victims' rights in relation to the newly adopted EU Victims' Rights Strategy. All organisations were active

in responding to numerous European Commission consultations, including the Victims' Rights Strategy, the Gender Equality Strategy, the Child Rights Strategy, the LGBTI Equality Strategy, and the European Disability Rights Strategy, etc.

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### Joint Efforts

With our EU NGO partners, we have developed a common advocacy language, and resources including joint events, statements, and campaigns-in-collaboration, which:

- 1) raise awareness on EU priorities in the field of victims' rights by highlighting critical gaps
- 2) provide details on the impact of the practical implementation of victims' rights in all EU member States.

### In 2020, VSE began developing stronger links with NGOs and other organisations in Europe.

In November 2020, VSE staff participated in the webinar "Hate Crime and COVID-19" organised by INHC-International Network of Hate crime. This virtual seminar gathered policy makers, practitioners, academics and other researchers from the EU, the UK, Australia, and other jurisdictions. The effects of COVID-19 on hate crime around the world were examined by researchers Kevin Wong (Manchester Metropolitan University) and Kris Christmann (University of Huddersfield), and guest speakers Rose Simkins, from the hate crime charity Stop Hate UK, and Matteo Vergani, a hate crime researcher at Deakin University, Melbourne.

That same month, VSE participated in the roundtable online discussion "Domestic violence against LGBTI people amid COVID-19: next steps on EU level" with speakers from the European Parliament, the European Commission, and civil society organisations. Additionally, VSE's Executive Director, Levent Altan, spoke at EIGE's Virtual Conference "Violence against women and COVID-19: How do we tackle two pandemics at once?". The event provided an opportunity to present two of EIGE's most recent studies: one exploring the implications of COVID-19 for female victims of intimate partner violence, and the other examining the factors that enable witnesses to better support victims.

In October 2020, VSE participated in the Wave Conference. This year, the WAVE Network addressed topics such as the impact of COVID-19 on women's specialist support services and how to effectively support vulnerable groups of women in a health crisis. Prominent speakers such as Dunja Mijatović, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, and Alia El-Yassir, UN Women Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, discussed structural barriers encountered by women and the efforts being made to address violence against women.

VSE also took part in ICRSE's webinar «Undeserving victims?» where the latest community report on access to justice for migrant sex workers in Europe was launched.

With the La Strada International joining forces with VSE, PICUM and ICRSE, joint efforts have focused on the access to compensation for migrant workers. This cumulated in La Strada's online conference "Recognize, respect and realizing rights". The aim of the conference was to connect civil society organizations in N. Macedonia with European and International networks, and social movements to strengthen their ability to advocate, monitor, analyze and network.

## 5.2 Enhancing the quality of victim support services

### 5.2.1 Workshops and Training

When it comes to building knowledge of victims' rights, VSE and its network bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the table. VSE's overall objective is to achieve change, and to strengthen the organisational capacity of its members, partner and external organisations, and those individuals, who interact with victims.

VSE supports the development of knowledge by delivering training courses, workshops, lectures, and presentations at its own events and at those organised by others.

These activities include the online Centre of Excellence Workshop on 116006 Helplines and Support at a Distance organised by VSE; a VSE 'for members' workshop on helplines during the COVID-19 pandemic; and during its Annual Conference, VSE delivered workshops on: a web-based referral system for victims of crime; providing information to victims of crime, software and hardware for the benefit of victim support; self-help technologies for victims of crime, online training tools for the benefit of victims, and virtual reality therapy. The workshops included presentations from VSE staff as well as its members and partners.



### 5.2.2 Standard-Setting

Our pioneering work on standards and accreditation has taken a different path during 2020. Experience has determined that our accreditation approach, as piloted in 2018, is not suitable for our larger member organisations. At this time, it has been decided that other methods should be tested, including the option of allowing members to align their services with our standards. The creation of this 'self-verification stage' will conserve, rather than stretch, VSE resources involved in the external verification process.

VSE's dedicated 'Standards and Accreditation' web-page was launched on the new Intranet. An online procedure offers members the option to carry out this self-evaluation using a questionnaire based on our nine service standards as well as providing resources explaining these standards in more detail.

**VSE Standards**

- STANDARD 1**  
Make services accessible to all victims of all types of crime
- STANDARD 1**  
Respecting victims and treating them with courtesy and dignity
- STANDARD 1**  
Working to ensure victims are safe
- STANDARD 1**  
Responding to individual victims' needs
- STANDARD 2**  
Support victims through different services
- STANDARD 1**  
Delivering for victims through referrals and co-ordination
- STANDARD 1**  
Ensuring good governance structures
- STANDARD 1**  
Achieving quality through training
- STANDARD 1**  
Improving our services through monitoring and evaluation

5

**Workshop**  
**116 006 European victim support helplines & supporting at a distance**  
**Online, 8 & 10 December 2020**

Victim Support Europe CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE  
With financial support from the Justice Programme of the European Union

### 5.2.3 Developing centres of excellence across the EU

As members are located in different countries, and may be in contact with different victim groups, the VSE Centre of Excellence is where they can share their 116 helpline and distance support knowledge, experiences, good and bad practice issues.

The VSE Centre of Excellence met online to discuss organisational priorities and interests for its 2020 Workshop with representatives of 6 VSE member organisations. Participants agreed to develop a VSE position paper on a harmonised European 116 006 helpline for victims of crime.

The Centre of Excellence's second online meeting took place in September, due to COVID-19 crisis scheduling challenges. Representatives from 9 VSE members provided updates on the status of their groups and on the increased use of distance support for victims, due to the COVID-19 crisis. A decision was taken to hold the 2020 Workshop online.

Participants expressed interest in the following topics for a Centre of Excellence workshop: good practices out of the COVID crisis; online support; and training of helpline staff.

The third online meeting, held in November, with delegates from 5 members. A VSE representative presented the draft version of the 116 006 position paper and gathered feedback and comments from the participants.

The 2020 Centre of Excellence Workshop on 116006 Helplines and Support at a Distance was held online, via Microsoft Teams, due to the health restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants met over two sessions, on 8th and 10th December. The Centre of Excellence allows VSE members to share their knowledge, experiences, good practices, and challenges on 116006 helplines and distance support topics. The sessions focused on three broad topics: the best practices taken out of the COVID-19 crisis; tips and practices to run online services; and training of staff. The workshop was attended by 14 participants from 10 organisations and 3 VSE staff.

### 5.2.4 Enhancing VSE's services for members

In 2020, we worked on increasing the level of quality and accessibility of member-oriented services. VSE members now have access to a range of benefits designed to enhance knowledge exchange, visibility, networking, and information sharing.

We have launched a brand-new intranet system to improve information-sharing with our membership. VSE's new website provides increased space for members' article submissions and our quarterly newsletters provides victims, members, and partners around the world with a voice.

VSE launched a new approach to managing its digital platforms for membership collaboration. Throughout 2020, VSE's 'One Voice-One Cause' campaign boasted its own unique microsite, while our annual conference was also represented by its own website and featured a unified registration system.

### 5.2.5 Assistance on the development of victim support in EU member states

While the COVID-19 crisis hit Europe in March 2020, Victim Support Europe remained committed to supporting individuals and organisations in the development of victim services across the EU, by providing space for organisations to exchange best practices, and by providing information to its members and the public. Our organizational efforts have mainly been impacted in terms of (a lack of) physical presence at events, while a quick shift to 100% home working and online meetings was immediately initiated.

Throughout 2020, we continued to strengthen our Europe-wide contacts; while context requires a particular approach to improve a country's victim support services, this year many countries encountered similar problems. A combination of individual and collective needs, and existing solutions, allowed us to move forward relatively easily.

## VSE INTRANET'S 5 MAIN OBJECTIVES

- CREATING A SINGLE POINT OF ENTRY TO THE KNOWLEDGE POOL, CONTACT DATABASE AND TOOLS FOR ALL 58 MEMBER ORGANISATIONS WORLDWIDE;
- LEVERAGE THE INTRANET'S POWER AS A PRIMARY INTERNAL COMMUNICATION CHANNEL FOR THE VSE'S COMMUNITY, ITS MEMBERS, SELECTED PARTNERS AND INDIVIDUAL EXPERTS;
- INCREASE THE ORGANISATION'S OVERALL EFFICIENCY WITH EASY ACCESS AND SHARED RESOURCES;
- PROVIDE A NEW WAY OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING BY MAKING IT EASIER TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE;
- ADJUST AND IMPROVE THE REFERRAL SYSTEM THAT ALLOWS VSE MEMBERS TO TRANSFER INFORMATION FROM ONE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER CONCERNING A VICTIM OF CRIME, IN ORDER TO PROVIDE CONTINUED SUPPORT TO THE VICTIM, AS WELL AS TO FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS.

### Regional Knowledge Exchange Event

Victim Support Europe, annually, organises a Regional Knowledge Exchange Event in a European city, offering a unique opportunity for victim support practitioners to participate in dialogue with a broader audience and increase their knowledge of victim support improvements.

In 2020, due to the public health crisis, the regional knowledge exchange was hosted online by VSE with the support of NATAL, one of our members. Participants from 7 countries gathered to discuss the Capacity and Resiliency of Helplines During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic. The meeting addressed the approaches in different European regions and facilitated a positive exchange of knowledge and good practices.



### National Meetings

Each year VSE, in collaboration with its members and partners, organizes national meetings aimed at sharing perspectives and views on the implementation of the 2012 EU Directive (Victims' Rights Directive) in Member States. These meetings are an opportunity to work together, through frank, open, and constructive dialogue, with to better protect and support victims of crime in various national contexts.

The first 2020 national meeting took place in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on 4 March and was hosted by the Slovenian Ministry of Justice, and attended by VSE Executive Director, Levent Altan. The meeting brought together the main Slovenian Stakeholders to discuss the full implementation of the Victims' Rights Directive in Slovenia.

The second national meeting took place online, 10 December 2020, when Aleksandra Ivankovic, VSE Deputy Director engaged with Croatian stakeholders. The meeting convened within the framework of the National Conference on Victims' Rights. The conference was co-hosted by the Croatian Ministry of Justice and Zenska Soba, the coordinator of NGO victim support in Croatia – both members of VSE. VSE supported the meeting organisation and Ms Ivankovic led a panel discussion focusing on the implementation of the EU legislation in Croatia. The Zoom meeting was attended by over one hundred Croatian participants, who were interested in finding a way forward for Croatia's victim support services.



## 5.3

**Advance improvements in laws and policies**

VSE works regularly with European and International Institutions to influence EU and international victims' rights law and policies. We have a formal, consultative, status with the UN's ECOSOC Committee and the Council of Europe, and we work closely with the European Commission, the European Parliament and various EU agencies such as the Fundamental Rights Agency.

In 2019, VSE was recognised as the European leader in issues of victims' needs and victims' rights, which resulted in a number of organisations and institutions offering invitations for VSE to partner with them on their activities and projects. Such activities included themes on compensation, ongoing terrorism topics, cybercrime and hate crime, e-evidence, etc.



Some examples include:

**DG-Justice:**

monthly, at a minimum, consultations with DG representatives on their priorities, on VSE-identified emerging issues, and on EU Victims' Rights Directive etc. compliance and implementation issues.

**DG-Home:**

engagement with respect to the confiscation of criminal assets, cybercrime, e-evidence, and child sexual exploitation.

**FRA:**

VSE continued cooperation with the FRA, including consulting on their programme, and being interviewed by the FRA to help in defining victims' rights priorities, and having FRA's representatives to speak at VSE-led events.

**European Parliament:**

VSE worked with individual MEPs to support EP work on victims' issues, the development of reports relevant to victims' rights, supporting the LIBE and FEMM Committees as well as the Special Committee on Terrorism (TERR).

**Europol:**

VSE explored opportunities to work with Europol's cybercrime unit. This resulted in Europol's participation in the VSE campaign 'Crime Is Crime. Even Online'.

**The United Nations:**

Since 2019, VSE has supported the UN in developing its follow-up paper on good practices in assisting victims of terrorism in Asia, which will be published in 2021. By carrying out its memorial campaign, VSE supported the UN's third International Day for Victims of Terrorism.



## 5.4 Raising awareness of victims' issues

All VSE's campaigns are developed in conjunction with our ongoing review and analysis of needs and opportunities within the European victim support community. VSE's five-year, membership-approved, strategic framework also guides the priorities and direction of our campaign work.

For 2020, our communications strategy highlighted the following objectives: raising awareness of victims' issues; sharing knowledge with national organisations; and strengthening VSE's collective capability (developing partnerships, organising networking events, member recruitment).

The main results of our increased communication effort were: the 2019 VSE Annual Report; four social media campaigns (the launch of the EU Victims' Rights Strategy, the launch of the two phases of the #OneVoiceOneCall campaign with a 6-day social media campaign, the campaign linked to our Online Autumn Conference); the new Intranet scheme; and several short videos for the above-mentioned campaigns.

As a result we raised widespread awareness via Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (150K people reached by Facebook, over 72K reached by Twitter, over 13K reached by YouTube). VSE's online Autumn Conference, and other public webinars, were successful and contributed to an EU-wide awareness raising on the implementation of victims' rights and services.



## Events and representation

### VSE Annual Conference

In 2020, VSE celebrated its 30th anniversary. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic and associated travel restrictions, VSE had to cancel its May 2020 Berlin Annual Conference, but we did manage to organise a large-scale online Autumn Event.

### VSE Autumn Conference

The COVID-19 crisis required that VSE cancel its annual conference, to have been held in Berlin in May 2020 and, therefore, became VSE's first online conference. This year's edition, 'Bridging High-Tech and Victim Support Services', united technology companies and experts with victim support community leaders leveraging technology for the benefit of victims of crime.

The conference was attended by over 130 participants, on Zoom, and the plenary session was live-streamed via Facebook and YouTube collecting an additional 30 participants.

Participants were sent a questionnaire, asking to evaluate different aspects of the conference, the speakers also gave their input. The conference received overwhelmingly positive

feedback, from the participants and from the speakers. 85% of survey respondents said the conference was well-organised (Agree or Strongly agree), and 85% found the content was interesting. 90% of respondents said the speakers were knowledgeable and presented their topics professionally, while 70% believed the information provided at the conference would be useful in their work.

Katarzyna Janicka-Pawlowska, the EC Coordinator for Victims' Rights, opened the conference and stated that the conference was motivating and inspirational, and gave an overview of new technologies that can successfully be applied within victims' rights. Dan Klein, who spoke at the conference as a representative of the Security and Crisis Centre by the European Jewish Congress, thanked VSE team for organising this high quality, interesting event.



## 5.5 Projects

**In 2020, VSE continued with its project workload. As previously, we aimed to engage only in projects, which are in line with our strategic priorities and, which ensure better services and implementation of rights for victims of crimes. We remain committed to engaging with our members whenever possible, however we always welcome external partners, whose participation and expertise contributes to the success of our efforts.**

### Project VICTORIAA



The VICTORIAA project is coordinated by the Vilnius Institute for Advanced Studies – VILIAS, a long-standing VSE partner in Lithuania. This project, which was launched in September 2017, aims to improve individual assessment, information, and referral measures for victims in Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, and Romania. As the project outputs significantly rely on international best practices, VSE led a work package, which aims to collect and analyse these practices, and to facilitate their replication in other legal environments.

Across Europe, practitioners increasingly focus on how best to inform victims of crime of their rights, refer them to relevant services, and identify their needs. Over the last 2 years, we have assessed these three areas during the victims' journey in Romania, Lithuania, Portugal, and Italy.

The research results were presented at the February 2020, Brussels conference 'Best Practices in Victims' Support: Referrals, Information, Individual Assessment: VICTORIAA'. This event provided an opportunity to learn about existing practical barriers and the tools, developed by partners, to counter these obstacles: a best European practices report, the mapping of services, information packages, a referral manual, and individual needs assessment guidelines.

### Project PREVICT



This project focuses on the analysis of victim-related information campaign best practices and on the development of a toolkit for the evaluation of communication activities.

The project contributes towards:

- the provision of information for victims on

- their rights and the support they can claim/receive;
- the understanding on how to effectively and inclusively provide information to victims;
- measuring the impact of information provision on victims of crimes.

### Project INHeRE- Inclusive Holistic Care for Refugee and Migrant Victims of Sexual Violence in Belgium, Sweden and the UK



The project aims to improve holistic care for MAR victims of SV, regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation and/or legal status, by strengthening the capacity of multi-sector professionals. Attention is given to making care pathways inclusive for MAR victims, who are male, LGBTQIA+, and/or victims of trafficking. To this end, a highly participatory research approach has been applied to the project.

### Project Counter@ct - Preventing and combating online radicalisation



Counter@ct's core objective is to promote behavioural change, dissuading 'extremist' groups from posting radicalising/terrorist content online and/or using violence, by providing them with counter-narratives, which use successful stories of disengagement by vulnerable groups from radical ideas. Tools, to address these groups via an online counter-narrative campaign and to assess its impact, are being identified.

### **Initiation of a Multidisciplinary Unit for Victims of Hate Crime/ Speech at Maltese Police / Maltese Ministry of Home Affairs**

Objectives:

- 1) To strengthen multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary cooperation
- 2) To upgrade the quality of services given to victims
- 3) To raise awareness, and encourage victims – and potential victims, witnesses, and bystanders – to report hate/speech crime
- 4) To exchange best practices with other EU Member States

VSE created a training module for the Maltese police and found experts (internal and external) to train the new hate crime prevention unit in Malta.

### **EU Centre of Expertise for Victims of Terrorism**

Victim Support Europe has been appointed to run the European Commission's Centre of Expertise for Victims of Terrorism.

The Centre will operate as a hub for guidance, expertise, and support with respect to victims of terrorism. Its establishment reflects the importance that the European Union places on victims. It also underlines the EU's commitment to partnerships between Member States, civil society, the private sector, and the victims, themselves.

To have a positive impact on victims of terrorism, the EU Centre will develop measures, guidelines, and training for practitioners as well as encouraging networks of experts at the national level to promote knowledge exchange and better cross-border responses. It will provide information for victims and will assist Member States to effectively transpose, and practically apply, EU rules applicable to victims of terrorism.

Once the project term is completed, the Centre's activities will be evaluated. This evaluation will determine whether there is an ongoing requirement, and what that would entail, to establish an EU Coordination Centre for Victims of Terrorism.

## **5.6 Terrorism**

**Since 2015, VSE has developed a specialist knowledge in the field of victims of terrorism. From our support for France Victimes after the Paris attacks in 2015, VSE has carried out various activities to ensure that policies, laws, and services at the national, European, and international level meet the needs of victims of terrorism. Below are the activities in which VSE is involved.**



## I. Support for Victims of Terrorism

### a) VSE Terrorism Response Network

VSE reacts to large scale terrorist attacks, whose victims include European citizens. Since 2015, VSE's Terrorism Response Network has been involved, globally, in more than 20 terrorist attacks: in France, Germany, Spain, UK, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Turkey, USA, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, etc.

In 2020, VSE responded to the following terrorist attacks:

- Vienna shootings, 4 November.

### b) Supporting the memory of victims of terrorism

Each year, VSE commemorates the 11 March (the European Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Terrorism), the 22 March (the anniversary of the 2016 Brussels attacks),

and the 21 August (the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism).

In 2020, these events were part of VSE's 'One Voice-One Cause' campaign aimed at raising-awareness of victims' rights and available support services.

## II. Law and Policy Development

VSE works extensively with national governments, the EU, and the UN to support the development of policies for victims of terrorism.

### 1. At the European level

#### EU Centre of Expertise for Victims of Terrorism

In December 2019, Victim Support Europe (VSE) was appointed to run the European Commission's Centre of Expertise for Victims of Terrorism.

Between 2020-2022, Victim Support Europe will run the Centre with its partners, Arq Impact, Fondation Lenval, and the AFVT, in co-operation with ICFI and Ecorys as well as with the support of many of its members.

### EU - European Directive on Combatting Terrorism

At the end of 2015, the European Commission introduced a new European Directive on combating terrorism. Although an important first step, the proposal was limited in its focus on victims of terrorism. Working with MEPs, and with the ongoing support of the European Commission, VSE pushed for - and achieved - a series of measures to support of victims of terrorism, including those from abroad.

In November 2020, VSE submitted feedback, to the European Commission, on the evaluation of the EU Directive on Combating Terrorism.

### 2. At the International level

#### UN - Handbook of Good Practices - Asia

Since 2019, VSE has supported the UN in the development of its follow-up paper on good practices in supporting victims of terrorism, in Asia. We anticipate the report will be published in 2021.

### Events

VSE has participated in the following victims of terrorism-related events:

- VOICES 2020 Virtual Annual Remembrance Symposium
- OSCE-Wide Counter-Terrorism Conference 2020
- Webinar 'International Day of Standing in Solidarity with the Victims of Terrorism'
- 2020 Virtual Counter Terrorism Week
- Voices of 9/11 Symposium 2020

## III. Networks and Training

Developing responses and policies on victims of terrorism requires extensive cooperation and coordination. As experts are spread across the globe, VSE has built a strong world-wide network to assist in its work. In tandem with the network, VSE not only develops its own policies, but also carries out training and capacity building.





### INVICTM Activities

In 2016, VSE helped establish an informal group of experts on terrorism consisting of individuals from civil society, governments, independent authorities, academic institutions, and law enforcement.

#### Monthly Conference Calls

The group holds monthly conference calls to discuss member activities and latest developments. They are critical to supporting international responses to terrorist acts as well as assisting in the development of VSE policies.

### INVICTM International Symposium

Since 2017, INVICTM has held an annual International Symposium for Victims of Terrorism alongside VSE's Annual Conference. These are invitation-only events, bringing together practitioners from victims' field to discuss the challenges of meeting the needs of victims of terrorism and to identify current solutions.

In 2020, the symposium was cancelled due to COVID-19 crisis.

# 06. NEW MEMBERS

### VSE New Members 2020

This year, VSE extended its membership network. 3 new groups joined in 2020, bringing our total membership to 61 organisations across 31 countries compared with 42 members in 2015. The yearly increase in new members is the result of VSE's continuous effort to improve its services to retain, and attract, existing, and potential, members.

**Klaipedia Social and Psychological Support Centre (KSPSC)**

**International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE)**

**Crisis and counselling Centre - Skalbes**

# 07. EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

Executive Board members  
(from 25 May 2020 onwards)



## João Lázaro

President of the 'Associação Portuguesa de Apoio à Vítima' (APAV), Portugal.  
Vice President



Vice-President

## Geraldine Hanna

Chief Executive, Victim Support Northern Ireland



Vice President

## Richard Olszewski

President of France Victimes



Treasurer

## Petra Klein

Weisser Ring Germany

## Executive Board members



## Leena-Kaisa Åberg

CEO of Victim Support Finland



## Livija Plančić

President of White Circle Croatia



## Gábor Veisz

Member of Fehér Gyűrű Közhasznú Egyesület/White Ring Association



## Olga Kostina

Founder and Chair of Victim Support Foundation Russia



## Tobias Koertner

Team leader for victim support at Weisser Ring Austria



## Silva Taravan

President of Rete Dafne Italia

# 08. HEAD OFFICE



**Levent Altan**  
Executive Director



**Aleksandra Ivankovic**  
Deputy Director



**Mazen Alsiufi**  
Finance Officer



**Marina Kazakova**  
Communications Officer



**Ruth Mary Shrimpling**  
Policy Officer



**Léa Meindre-Chautrand**  
Policy Officer





**Inês Nunes de Freitas**

Project Officer



**Keti Varoschlija  
Botterman**

Administrative Assistant



**Annelies Blondé**

Project Assistant



**Selma Rekik**

Policy Assistant



**Iris Lokerse**

Policy Assistant



**Oleksandra (Sasha)  
Boychenko**

Researcher



**An Verelst**

Volunteer



**Solène Baudouin-Naneix**

Volunteer



**Pamela Dalby**

Volunteer

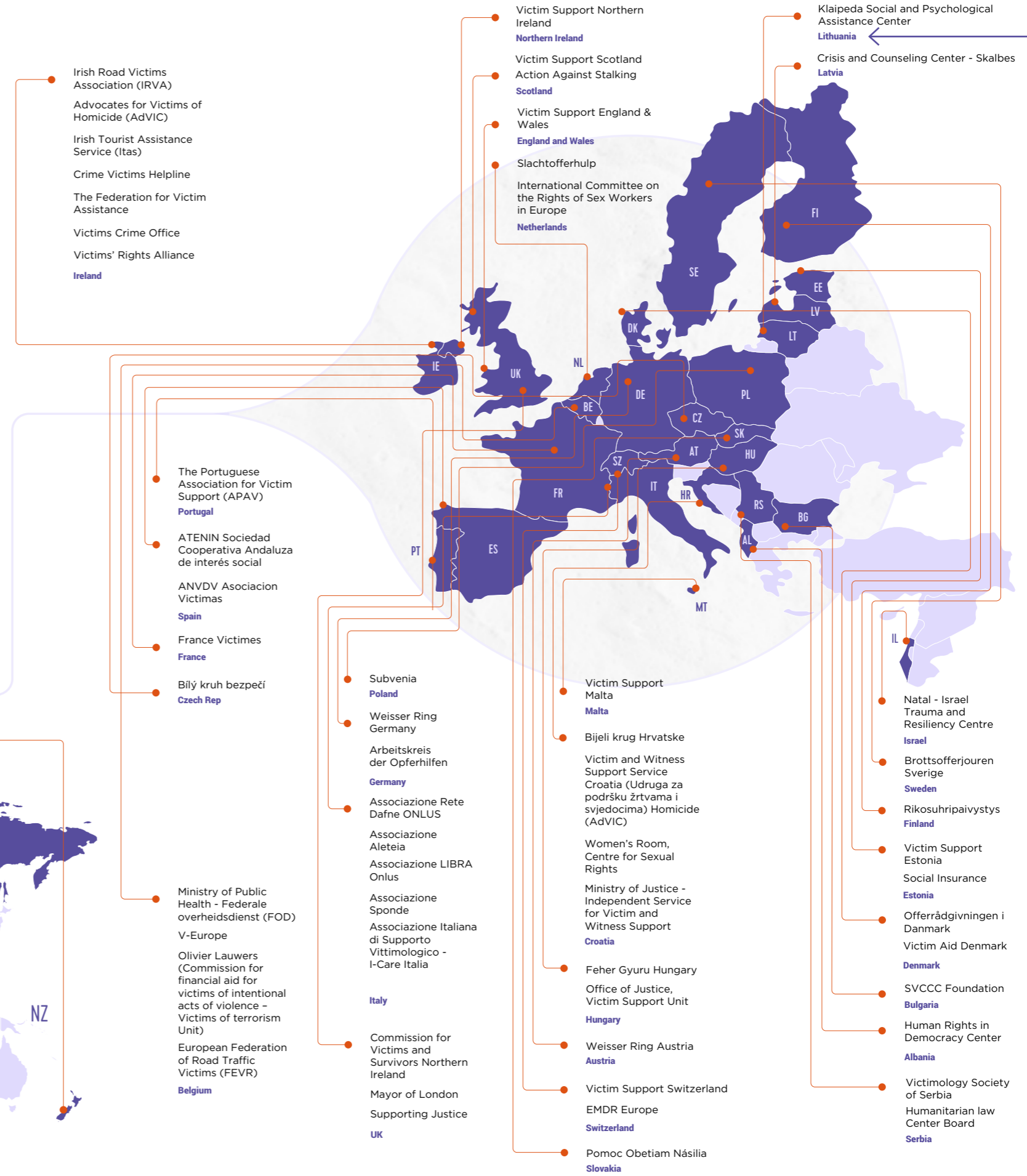
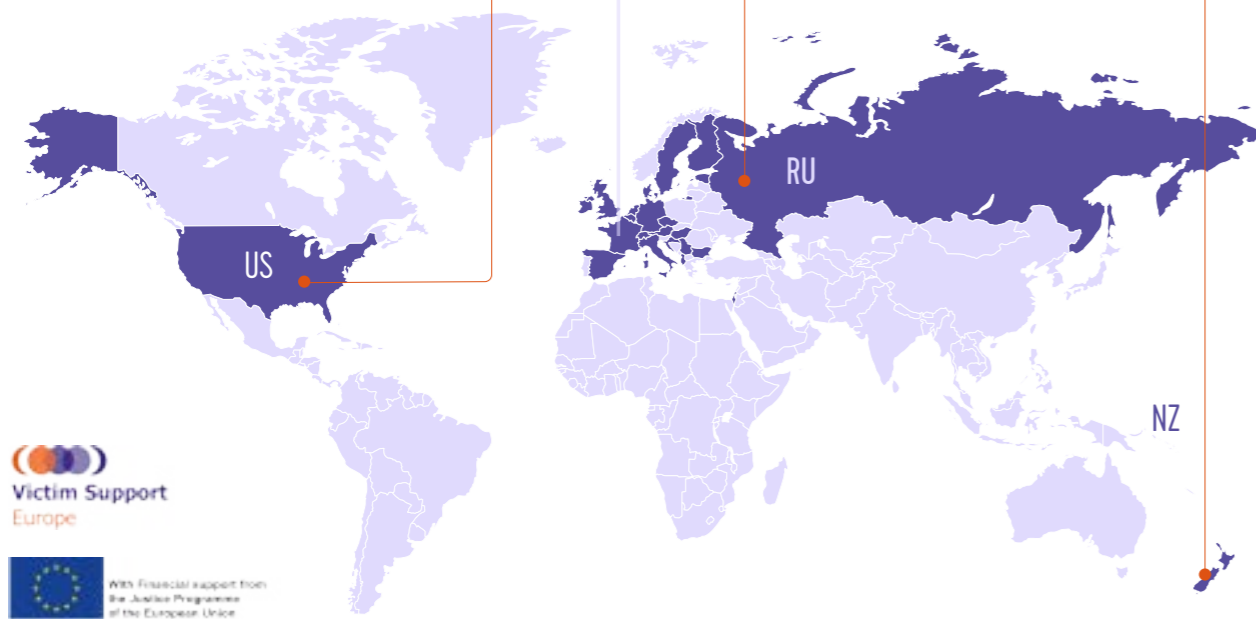


# MEMBERS MAP

2020

Victim Support Europe is a community of 61 organisations who help over 2 million victims of crime a year and who campaign for a world where victims' rights are enjoyed by all.

Our vision is a Europe in a world where the needs of all victims of crime are fully met through effective rights and high quality services.



# 10. TREASURE'S REPORT

2020 has proven to be another successful year for Victim Support Europe. As per our strategic objective to increase our financial resilience, we have continued to diversify our income sources resulting in a **32.5% increase in income in 2020 compared to 2019**.

The diversity of the income has been achieved in particular, through eight projects – six action grants (VICToRIIA, Previct, CREST, Counteract, IMUHVCS, INHERE) and one contract (EU Centre of Expertise on victims of terrorism) and the operating grant. Income increase was achieved through the existing action grants and largely the successful adoption of the EU Centre of Expertise on victims of terrorism contract.

These projects have been carefully pursued to support VSE's financial integrity whilst developing victims' rights and services across Europe, in line with VSE's priorities.

In 2020, VSE made specific investment decisions which allowed us to grow the organisation through efficient use of EU funds. These investments will put the organisation in a strong position in the coming years.

As result of this approach, VSE total income in 2020 was of **€881,519** with result in a year-end surplus of **€26,767**. Our available reserves position increased as a result to **€222,377**, in line with our plans to move towards a reserve level of €223,500. We are therefore close to that objective.

This approach ensured that by the end of 2020, we were able to accomplish our strategic objectives of sustainable growth whilst diversifying our income sources. Income continues to be drawn through an EU operating grant, member registrations, projects and donations.

The financial statements, as prepared and audited under Belgian law, show a healthy Audit Report. The General Meeting in 26th May 2021 approved the financial report 2020 and the audit report 2020 as audited by VSE's statutory auditor Crowe Horwath Callens Pirenne & Co.

This places us in an extremely strong position to continue our carefully planned growth in 2021 enabling additional improvements in VSE's operations and the delivery of new services.

# 11. CLOSING THOUGHTS

In a year of unparalleled challenges, VSE stood strong, continuing to deliver results that benefited both victims and victim support professionals. Looking at the past year, we can proudly say that we have successfully achieved considerable progress in improving victims' rights, support, and services. However, this could only be achieved by the hard work of our Executive Board Members, our Brussels office team, and with the support we constantly receive from our members.

This year was an historic year for the European Commission and EU policy development. The Commission published two important strategies: the Gender Equality Strategy and the EU Victims' Rights Strategy, in addition to numerous consultations. We welcome these developments and look forward to the strategies becoming a practical reality in the near future.

VSE's activities support the implementation of the EU's Directive on Victims' Rights and contribute to improving the knowledge and capacity of members and non-members as well as increasing collaboration between members to increase the number of victims able to access quality services across Europe.

**Every voice makes a difference, every action builds momentum and pressure for change.**

# VICTIM SUPPORT EUROPE

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