Communications Strategy 2019

This document provides a framework for VSE to manage and conduct its communications work in a comprehensive and integrated way.

Contents

1. Purpose

This communications strategy is aimed at advancing Victim Support Europe's (VSE's) strategic objectives to *drive change*, *support service delivery* and *operate sustainably whilst growing capability* by enabling VSE to engage effectively with stakeholders and promote a clear understanding of the organisation's work. It offers a framework for VSE to manage and conduct its communications work in an integrated way.

2. Context

Founded in 1990, VSE is the leading European umbrella organisation advocating on behalf of all victims of crime to ensure strong rights and services for them. It represents 54 national member organisations, providing support and information services to more than 2 million people affected by crime every year in 30 countries. VSE works towards its mission through advocacy to improve EU and international laws, through research and knowledge development and through capacity building at the national and local level.

Until now VSE has not had a communications strategy in place. With a steadily growing membership and expanding work, VSE recognises the importance of having a communications strategy that is a key and intrinsic component of its organisational planning to facilitate the realisation of its objectives – both strategic and operating/contractual. The strategy complements objectives set in the Draft Strategy 2016-2020.

A comprehensive communications strategy is motivated by the need to establish criteria for informed decision-making, ensure continuity and preserve institutional memory for communications work.

3. SWOT analysis of communications environment

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• **Reputation:** well-respected organisation in the field of victims' rights	• **Lack of strategic planning:** Communications is not yet an integral part of the overall strategic planning
• **Network:** A good network of member organisations, many of whom are willing to cooperate on communications	• **Lack of messaging** for a narrative to grip a wide audience, covering all types of crime
• **Motivated and engaged staff:** Good understanding of a broader and strategic approach to communications	• **Limited media recognition** of VSE's work/brand
	• **Irregular or inconsistent use of digital media** (non-dynamic website, sporadic social media, underutilised intranet)
• **Digital communication:** Internal and external communications	• **Lack of dedicated staff capacity** to make communications a focal concern

channels in place – publications (flyers, leaflets), quarterly electronic newsletter, digital and social media (website, intranet, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn) • **Potentially wide audience:** Subject matter touches everyone	and fully exploit its potential
OPPORTUNITIES • **Building networks** through social media and personal interaction with members, NGOs, media, key players in the EU institutions and the public • **Collaborating** with member organisations through a communications network to share messaging and resources • **Growing reach and increasing impact** by developing and streamlining channels and producing content • **Enhancing brand recognition** by establishing a distinct voice and message • **Creating partnerships** with the technology sector (to raise funds, develop practical aids for victims, etc.)	**THREATS** • **Under-exploitation** of communication channels due to lack of staff capacity • **Continuity** of effort and goals at risk without clearly defined strategy or staff involvement • **Erratic public engagement or media interest** due to lack of interest in certain types of crime • **Financial constraints** may limit growth opportunities • (A few hitches accompanying the implementation of a new communications strategy)

4. Mapping communications objectives to organisational objectives

Mission: Drive Change

Operational or policy objectives	Communications objectives

• Advance improvements in laws and policies	• Engage with key stakeholders using diverse means and channels
	
	  • Target messaging to officials and partners
	  • Involve the public through web or social media actions (signature campaigns, surveys, etc.)

Operational or policy objectives	Communications objectives
	• Use media to help publicise opinion and push policies

• Pursue compliance with existing laws and policies	• Provide a regular flow of information
	
	   • Raise public awareness of laws and policies by making them accessible to the wider audience (audio-visual means or storytelling)
	   • Promote dialogue with relevant actors by highlighting successes and failures of compliance

• Raise awareness of victims' issues and our work	• Raise VSE profile and objectives
	
	   • Enhance understanding by mainstreaming messaging in appropriate context (healthcare, digital partnerships, etc.)
	   • Stimulate engagement by creating a narrative regarding victims and victimisation
	   • Showcase VSE efforts and achievements for all stakeholders

Mission: Support service delivery

Operational or policy objectives	Communications objectives

• Drive improvements in the quality and accessibility of services	• Ensure up-to-date information flow
	
	   • Highlight gaps in service delivery
	   • Promote examples of good practice and work on standards
	   • Facilitate sharing of best practices and communications resources among members

• Support coordination and delivery of coherent support services	• Coordinate information and messaging across the network
	
	   • Monitor and raise awareness of current issues between members and other stakeholders
	   • Encourage cross-referencing members' work (e.g. on social media)
	   • Disseminate members' actions and activities at the European and international level

Mission: Operate sustainably whilst growing capability

Operational or policy objectives	Communications objectives

• Strengthen VSE collective capability	• Strengthen the communications capacity of members
	
	   • Facilitate networking, information exchange and skill sharing, and provide training
	   • Support communications objectives of members beyond their local domain, where possible

• Invest in VSE infrastructure	• Build a strong communications infrastructure
	
	   • Develop and coordinate an active network with member communications workers to share knowledge and resources
	   • Identify possibilities to support or replicate activities to increase impact (e.g. through a network calendar)
	   • Develop partnerships with digital and technology companies for communications and support

• Strengthen financial resilience	• Promote and market VSE brand and value
	
	   • Publicise VSE work to show good use of donors'/members' money
	   • Reach out to potential members and supporters with targeted messages via social media and explore campaigns through newsletter, flyers, surveys, etc.
	   • Target agencies on social media (or through flyers, etc.) towards a membership/supporter drive

5. Stakeholders and audience

Internal
  ➢ **Board**
  ➢ **Members: full, associate (and potential)**
  ➢ **Staff**
  ➢ **Volunteers**

External
  ➢ **Victims**

- **Policy makers**
  - ✓ EU institutions and their agencies
    - European Union
      - Justice and Consumers (JUST): Věra Jourová, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality; Tiina Astola, Director-General
        - Related agencies
          - Eurojust: EU Judicial Cooperation Unit, The Hague. A judicial cooperation body created to help provide safety within an area of freedom, security and justice
          - FRA: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Vienna. An advisory body of the European Union
          - EIGE: European Institute for Gender Equality, Vilnius. A European agency supporting the work of EU governments and EU institutions
          - EJTN: The European Judicial Training Network, Brussels. Platform for training and exchange of knowledge of the European judiciary
          - ERA: Academy of European Law, Trier and Brussels
      - Migration and Home Affairs (HOME): Dimitri Avramopoulos, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship; Julian King, Commissioner for Security Union
        - Related agencies
          - FRONTEX: EU external borders agency
          - EUROPOL: European Police Office, European Union's law enforcement agency
          - EASO: European Asylum Support Office
          - CEPOL: European Police College, European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training
          - RAN CoE: Radicalisation Awareness Network
          - EMCDDA: European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction
      - Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (EMPL): Marianne Thyssen, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Mobility
        - Related agencies
          - EUROFOUND: The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
          - EU-OSHA: The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work
      - European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO): Christos Stylianides, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management
      - European Parliament Committees
        LIBE: Monika Hohlmeier, Tomáš Zdechovský
        FEMM: Anna Záborská
        DROI
        EMPL
        JURI
      - European External Action Service: Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission

- European Economic and Social Committee (EESC): EU consultative body, Georges Dassis, President
  - Council of Europe
    - Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General
    - Nils Muižnieks, Commissioner for Human Rights

- ✓ International organisations
  - UNDP
  - UNODC
  - UNICEF

- ✓ National governments

- ➢ **Partner organisations**
  - ✓ Non-governmental organisations working on victims issues
    - AGE Platform Europe
    - Amber Alert Europe
    - CEP – Confederation of European Probation
    - Child Helpline International
    - Child Helpline International
    - ENAR
    - End-FGM
    - European Forum for Restorative Justice
    - European Society of Criminology
    - FENVAC
    - FEVR
    - ILGA-Europe
    - Inclusion Europe
    - Missing Children Europe
    - PICUM
    - Transgender Europe
    - WAVE

- ➢ **Groups related by field of work**
  - ✓ Judicial and welfare agencies and support groups working with victims of crime

- ➢ **Media**
  - ✓ European media (Politico, New Europe, EU Observer, Agence Europe)
  - ✓ International news agencies (Reuters, CNN, BBC, AP)
  - ✓ National mainstream media

- ➢ **Donors and sponsors**

- ➢ **Academics**
  - ✓ International Victimology Institute Tilburg (INTERVICT)
  - ✓ Leuvens Instituut Voor Criminologie (LINC)

6. Key messages and methods of communications

Audience	What they need to know	What VSE should convey	Communications methods
Members	• What informational and practical support we offer • How to access our services	• We offer them advocacy, advice and training. • We provide added value to their efforts (being part of the VSE collective makes them stronger individually). • They are part of a network working towards a common goal and we value their opinion and input.	• Newsletter • Intranet • Website • Social media to multiply messages • Workshops • Annual report
Policy makers	• Information on victims' needs and how it can be reflected in policy and legislation	• We represent a prominent network working closely with victims. • We provide expert advice on the development and implementation of victims' rights legislation and public policies, backed by quality research and evidence.	• Strategy, manifesto, • Annual report • Joint statements, • Letters • Social media • Website • Face-to-face meetings • Reports: studies, articles
Partners	• How we can cooperate to achieve shared	• We are a reliable and involved partner.	• Social media • Newsletter

Audience	What they need to know	What VSE should convey	Communications methods
	objectives	• We have expertise in victims' rights. • We provide added value in collaborations.	• Meetings • Annual report
Groups related by field of work	• How to keep victims' rights central before, during and after the judicial process	• We provide expert advice based on our knowledge of and role in influencing EU policy and legislation as well as the grassroots experience of our network.	• Reports: studies, articles • Information leaflets • Website • Social media
Donors and supporters and general public	• What we do for victims • How we represent the interests of victims	• We are the voice of all victims of crime and play a role in influencing EU policy to bring about change for improving victims' rights. • Our efforts provide victims with practical help in securing justice, support and protection. • Their help can make an important contribution in improving the situation of victims all over Europe.	• Newsletter • Website • Social media • Annual report • Flyers/information leaflets • Video
Media	• Current developments and points of interest for the wider public related to victims'	• We provide objective and professional, evidence-based expert opinion on	• Website • Social media • Interviews

Audience	What they need to know	What VSE should convey	Communications methods
	issues	victims' rights and support in Europe. • We have the respect and authority to speak for and raise awareness of victims' rights.	• News articles • Annual report
Academics	• Statistics, research, policy developments	• We are a resourceful and reliable network for cooperation.	• Research documents • Annual report

➢ **Some key messages to be repeated and reformulated across platforms**
  ✓ EU-directive/content related
  - Victims of crime need long term support and their needs must be provided for in the aftermath of crime
  - Victims of crime in Europe are entitled to help even if they are not resident in the country where the crime occurred
  - Crime affects more than the victims directly involved
  - Relevant authorities must follow the EU directive to avoid revictimisation
  ✓ Membership and supporter oriented
  - Join us in making a difference for victims' rights
  - Crimes may go underreported because of fear of reprisal but victims still suffer. We try to ensure that they get the support they need through our network
  - We lobby to ensure access to judicial processes for all victims many of whom may be missing out for a variety of reasons
  - Our members work closely with victims to offer support and information in the aftermath of crime however big or small
  ✓ General awareness raising
  - Victim blaming can cause as much damage as the original crime
  - 1 in 3 women are victim of abuse
  - Messages on national and local initiatives concerning victim support, victims' rights
  - News about our members' work

7. Means and platforms for communications

- ➤ **Website** (launched in November 2015 – advertised on **Google Ad Words**)
  Information:
  - ✓ About us
    - • Who we are
    - • Our work
    - • Our projects
    - • Our policy and strategy
    - • Our board
    - • Our team
    - • Our members
    - • Our partners
    - • Contact us
  - ✓ Help for victims
    - • Find help
    - • Being a victim
    - • Practical advice
    - • Victims' rights
  - ✓ Get involved
    - • How to get involved
    - • Become a member
    - • Donate
    - • Keep up to date
    - • Volunteer with us
    - • Join us as an intern
    - • Help your local victims organisation
    - • Quotes from current members
  - ✓ Members
    - • Find an organisation
    - • Become a member
  - ✓ Events
  - ✓ Publications
  - ✓ Member area (restricted)
  - ✓ Links to Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Pinterest

- ➤ **Social media**
  - ✓ Twitter: @VictimSupportEU
  - ✓ Facebook page: victimsupporteurope
  - ✓ YouTube channel: Victim Support Europe
  - ✓ LinkedIn

- ➤ **Intranet**
  - ✓ Platform for members to communicate and exchange information
  - ✓ Includes a 'Knowledge Library' of reference materials *(Note: Currently being developed)*

- ➤ **Newsletter** (electronic quarterly)

- ➢ **Annual report**

- ➢ **Policy papers and reports**

- ➢ **Information materials**
  - ✓ VSE membership leaflet
  - ✓ Corporate sponsorship package
  - ✓
- ➢ **Audio-visual**
  - ✓ Information video regarding victims of crime in Europe
  - ✓ *Planned: video to be used for fundraising*

- ➢ **Strategy document**
  - ✓ Four-year strategy outline *(Note: Release timing and publicity should be well planned at the beginning of the four-year period.)*

- ➢ **Media**
  - ✓ Interviews with journalists
  - ✓ Written contributions (*Note: This is a desirable future development – media outlets are interested in following stories so VSE must create a narrative in its distinctive voice and trademark brand.)*

- ➢ **Annual meetings**
  - ✓ May
  - ✓ November

- ➢ **Conferences, seminars, workshops**
  - ✓ Event hosted in the EU institutions (November)
  - ✓ Workshops for members *(Note: Timing coincides with annual general meetings.)*
  - ✓ Conferences and seminars on invitation

- ➢ **Communications calendar**
  - ✓ Planning tool for highlighting dates and events around which messages can be sent out
  - ✓ Means to coordinate with other members on upcoming events

- ➢ **Brand-related materials**
  - ✓ Business cards
  - ✓ Stationery
  - ✓ Give aways
  - ✓ Roll-out standing banners

8. Resources

- ➢ Web developer
- ➢ Designer

➤ Printer
➤ Volunteers
➤ Members' communications group *(for stories, campaigns, etc.)*
➤ *Target: Contributors for newsletter*

9. Timescales

A number of the above means and platforms operate on predetermined schedules (for instance, the newsletter, annual report, strategy document, annual conferences, etc.). {As mentioned in accompanying notes, the schedules of some need a rethink.}

Reactive work on the website and social media can often not be planned in advance. Ideally, a weekly (or monthly) action plan will (should) be developed for messaging on social media and the website with a view to developing a narrative and storytelling. Twitter and Facebook should be updated daily. Working towards a monthly YouTube update with interesting content should be a goal. *(Note: a social media strategy will detail a work programme for social media channels.)*

10. Monitoring and evaluation

The performance of each channel will be measured by the means and methods indicated. Its success will be a reflection of the targets achieved.

Channel	Measure	Target
Website	• (Google) Analytics for monthly tracking of activity number of visitors	• Increase the number of new and returning visitors • Get donations/supporters • Actively promote on social media • Provide link to website on all communications
Social media	• Number of followers, retweets, mentions on Twitter • Number of likes, shares on Facebook • Content and subscribers on YouTube • Number of pins on Pinterest • LinkedIn network	• Increase number of followers on Twitter; X mention every X week; likes in double digits • Promote VSE message and work with tweets • Translate retweets into English and comment where possible • Develop VSE voice with identifiable hashtags • Sustained increase in shares and likes on Facebook • Aim for at least one new upload on YouTube each X month and

Channel	Measure	Target
	established	increasing subscribers • Increase in number of pins for original content
Intranet	• Survey and observation	• All members actively and comfortably using forums and Knowledge library • Knowledge base updated and organised

Newsletter	• Survey
	   • What do they read/see/hear?
	   • What works or doesn't?
	   • What would they like to see more of or is there information needed that is not currently there?
	
	• Mailchimp analytics
		• Launch of new format to generate more interest and participation in it
		
		• External influential contributors

Annual report	• Internal review • Survey	• Launch quality product with new format to reflect VSE's work around themes or strategic objectives • Generate interest outside VSE membership (possibly in media)
Information materials	• Up-to-date flyers to further specific VSE objectives	• Fundraising brochure • EU directive presentation materials (PowerPoint and/or flyer)
Audio-visual	• Any new content created and shared	• Fundraising video
Strategy document	• Feedback	• Quality document used as reference throughout its life cycle

Media	• Number of media inquiries
	
	• Number of interviews/articles published
		• Build relationship with media
		   • Build media contacts database
		   • Identify outlets that might be interested
		   • Develop stories and narrative they might be interested in for quotes or op-eds

Conferences, seminars, workshops	• Number of events and/or participants	• Two relevant, needs-based workshops for members

Channel	Measure	Target
	• Number of events attended	
Communications calendar	• Feedback and observation	• Used as a central planning tool for communications work
Brand related materials	• Availability and use	• Use to promote brand for all outward facing interactions

11. Implementation

On approval, the communications strategy will be made operational either as part of the annual work programme of staff or by assigning work packages to staff and/or volunteer(s).

It will be routinely monitored and evaluated (as part of weekly team meetings) and its progress and results will be included in the annual report.