

# VSE GENERAL MEETING

4<sup>th</sup> December 2020, 10.00 – 12.00 Brussels time

Held: ONLINE

## MINUTES

KEY		
João Lázaro	<b>JL</b>	President
Geraldine Hanna	<b>GH</b>	Vice-President
Petra Klein	<b>PK</b>	Treasurer
Levent Altan	<b>LA</b>	Executive Director
Aleksandra Ivankovic	<b>AI</b>	Deputy Director
Léa Meindre-Chautrand	<b>LMC</b>	Policy officer
Marina Kazakova	<b>MK</b>	Communications Officer

### 1. Opening and Welcome

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

### 2. Report of activities 2020

The minutes of the previous AGM were approved.

### 3. Financial report: 2020

Presented by PK

**INCOME:** Total Income increased of 33% compared to 2019 – largely due to EU Centre of Expertise and the action grants (mainly PREVICT and CREST).

**EXPENDITURE:** VSE expenditure is anticipated to increase by 13% compared to 2019. Members should note that in 2020, a range of activities could not be carried out under the operating grant due to Covid-19 related restrictions. VSE adapted to the circumstances and used some of the unspent funds to carry out different activities e.g. development of training platform. VSE chose not to use the full underspend to minimise overall costs in 2020, and reduce risk of debt.

**Summary of Operating and Action Grants (2020)** A number of project 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.

**Conclusion:** Based on the current income and expenditure as determined by our accounting, we anticipate a deficit of 22,050 euros in 2020. However, a range of mitigations are likely to reduce this. We anticipate to receive a first tranche payment for the EUCVT contract. This will substantially reduce any debt in 2020, to possibly close to zero. A 10, 000 Canadian dollar budget has just been assigned to VSE to carry a report for the Leadership in Counter terrorism organisation. We anticipate this income will be included in 2020 accounts. As such, we believe that our final financial report for 2020 will show either a balanced budget or a slight surplus.

**Reserves:** We anticipate that by the end of the year the level of the VSE's reserves would be 11% reduction in our reserves from 2019. This means that approximately VSE could operate for 1.5 months less time. However, this is based on VSE having no identified immediate income. In reality, VSE's EU framework contract runs until end 2021. The EU Commission has also confirmed that there will be no reduction in the DG Justice budget for victims. In addition, VSE has several ongoing and new projects running in 2021 and 2022.

This places VSE in a much safer position that anticipated, though of course there are always risks.

**New projects:** VSE has won new action grants which will start on 2021:

- **FYDO Project:** 150,000 Euro for 24 months' period (Coordinator)
- **Infovictims III:** 55,000 Euro for 24 months' period (Partner)
- **Estonian government:** 500,000 Euro for 24 months

#### **4. Presentation of new members**

- Klaipedia Social and Psychological Support Center (KSPSC)
- the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE)

#### **5. Overview of VSE 2020 work – 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter update**

AI gave an overview of the policy and advocacy work. As VSE is growing and having more expertise, we are looking to work in a collaborative manner especially with the European Parliament. We are spreading our horizons and try to profound our cooperation.

The current focus is on:

- Training platform in construction: we created the budget of underspent after approval of EU Commission. We had an open selection procedure, and we selected a Belgian company to work on it. The platform will enable us to develop further our training activities and we are looking at different options. We also want members to have their trainings there and be able to use that.

- Campaigns
- Projects work

**Note:** Victor Jammers left VSE, and joined the covid-10 crisis cell in the Netherlands. We ensured the continuation of the project, and Aleksandra took over as a manager of the EUCVT. A new project manager joining VSE staff soon.

#### **a. Policy & Advocacy work**

LMC explained that VSE responded to 10 EU consultations. The aim was to mainstream victims' rights in different DGs (DG Home, DG Employment, DG Connect). The focus was on the implementation of the EU legislation related to victims' issues: safe access to justice, training, collection of data, important of cooperation and coordination at different levels between civil society and enforcement authorities. Upcoming consultations are on the evaluation of the Victims' Rights Strategy and the Roadmap of the evaluation of the implementation of the Victims' Rights Directive. We noticed that when topics are broad, victims' issues are just lost and not addressed. So it is very important for VSE to respond to those consultations.

As regards advocacy:

- VSE has been in contact with Members of the European Parliament, attending meetings and hearings, and intervened.
- Cooperation with EU Coordinator on victims of human trafficking and the Coordinator on child's rights.
- Council of Europe and the UN anti-terrorism office.

#### **b. Events organized by VSE**

- Annual Conference
- Centre of expertise coming up
- NGO consultation meeting on VRs Strategy and more.
- Launching of the VRs Strategy with Commissioner Reynders

#### **c. Events organized by others where we were invited to intervene:**

- EStAR (OSCE Project on hate crime)
- OSCE Bosnian office: on support for victims of trafficking
- Conference of Croatian network for victim support NGOs
- EIGE conference on consequences of COVID 19 on Women's rights
- La Strada Conference on victims of human trafficking

#### **d. Campaigning in the second half of 2020**

MK explained that VSE has been improving its campaigning performance. We had a conversation with the Commission on our best practices in campaigning and awareness raising. The VSE upcoming campaign's slogan is: "You won't believe it, but it exists". This will be launched on 22 February, as a teaser. VSE Members are involved in preparing content. Currently 10 animation videos (in national languages, subtitled in English)

"One voice one cause" campaign coming in the last quarter of the year. The campaign was linked to 5 important events, 4 of which were organized by VSE. Also VSE participated in thematic campaigns  
Outcomes: 147 campaign visuals, 15 videos, a new campaign website, and over 100 contributors including external NGOs. VSE reached more than half a million individuals via our social media out of which 240 000 within 2 weeks-time when those 5 events were taking place. In the next year, VSE will link campaigning efforts to events as much as possible in order to extend visibility and increase exposure. It is also important to localize future campaigns to national to national contexts.

#### **e. Update on projects**

**EUCVT:** AI will be in charge of this project and the new Project managed will be taking over. VSE will be sending invitations for nominations for "train the trainer" event (nomination of people who will be future national trainers). VSE will make sure that staff from its members will be involved, and a train the trainer session will be taking place in February 2021.

**PREVICT:** information tools development in a number of countries. They are about to produce videos for the campaigns.

**CREST:** we are helping develop a response and resilience in societies to terrorist attacks. The citizens' survey way launched. Please disseminate it as much as possible.

#### **New projects:**

**FYDO:** hopefully starting activities in January 2021.

**Victim Support in Estonia:** triangulation between Ministry of Justice, Commission and VSE. They want to improve their victim support and start developing victim-centric justice systems. This is a 2-year project that will probably start in February/March 2021.

**InfoVictims III:** APAV won the project and VSE will be a partner.

#### **VSE Position paper on 116 006 Helplines**

LMC presented the paper which contains 3 main objectives:

1. Calling for all EU Member States to have an operational 116 006 helpline (only 13 member states have this helpline, and 12 of them are run by VSE Members). It covers the costs incurred,

the role of the EU and Member States' authorities in supporting their victim support organisations to implement and run this helpline.

2. Minimum scope and operational requirements as determined by EU law (VR Directive and the 116 006 Decision): service open to all citizens, information, support, referral, free, confidential, not limited in time, etc.
3. VSE Standards applying to victim support organisations can also apply to the ones running this helpline. This section elaborates on that.

The paper has different targeted audiences:

- Organisations running this helpline: to have the minimum scope and quality requirements. They can also use this paper to advocate at national level to get more funding from their State to be able to run this properly
- At the EU level: specific funding programme for victim support organisations to run the helpline
- Member States and victim support organisations to use the paper to advocate for the importance of this helpline and work towards its establishment.

The paper will be published next year.

### **Data Protection Paper**

AI presents the Data Protection Paper. We have been working to understand the effects of GDPR on victim support and victims' data. AI points out that GDPR is not the only reason we care about victims' data, it simply formalises and unifies the concerns our members have had for victims' data and its confidentiality for years. One of these concerns is safely storing victims' data. At the moment, VSE team is finalising the paper and awaiting some of the last feedback, after which the paper will be circulated among the members.

### **VSE Strategy 2021-25**

GH presented the VSE Strategy and described the way it was drafted. The VSE team was supported by a working group comprised of a range of VSE members who oversaw the development of the draft strategy. This draft was then disseminated to all members for review and feedback. The final document will include the vision, mission, values etc. and will be designed as a standalone publication that will be shared on the VSE website.

GH presents the six strategic priorities will drive VSE's work over the next 5 years.

- 1) Promote implementation and strengthening of victims' rights
- 2) Ensure victims are recognised, treated with respect and protected from secondary victimisation

- 3) Promote the rights, resilience and recovery of victims, and strengthen victim support
- 4) Facilitate full access to support for victims within a national framework
- 5) Work towards victim-centred justice and compensation systems
- 6) Grow and Strengthen VSE

VSE has committed to pay particular attention to the needs of victims of terrorism, cybercrime, hate crime and gender-based violence as well as focusing on how crime disproportionately affects vulnerable victims. However, whilst we recognise the distinct issues that can affect specific groups of victims and will work to address these, we will remain faithful to our fundamental belief in the need to advocate against a hierarchy of victims and ensure that the rights and needs of victims of all crime are addressed.

### **6. Overview of VSE's 2021 Activities**

LA provides an overview of activities VSE has planned for 2021 which are based on the six strategic priorities outlined earlier. 2021 activities can be divided into the following categories:

- Advocacy
- Policy development
- Supporting members:
  - Bringing members together
  - Addressing national priorities and needs
  - Providing knowledge, infrastructure, training, and project support
- Training
- Partnerships

LA reiterates that VSE's main goal is changing the way victims are treated through having a direct impact on the experiences of victims as well as their access to rights and services. He then speaks in more detail about VSE's efforts in the area of advocacy, including various partnerships with international institutions. LA also talks about bringing VSE members together through more events (conferences, webinars, workshops, etc.), regional exchanges, national meetings, staff exchanges, and the Centre of Excellence for the 116 006 line. Information exchange will also continue to happen through the launch of VSE's new website, awareness campaigns, and various project events.

Next, LA speaks about the training objectives for the next years, which are to be achieved through a variety of different avenues. VSE aims to launch an online training platform and organise webinars, workshops, etc. The team also aims to convert existing knowledge into training-friendly content, such as PowerPoint presentations, and cooperate with other organisations for mutual training.

GH and LA thanked everyone for attending the meeting as well as for their continuous engagement and participation and wishes everyone happy holidays.