



workshop
116 006 european victim support helplines & supporting at a distance

mainz, 5-7 december 2018

hosted and organised by



co-organisation



Report of Workshop 116006 European victim support helplines and supporting at a distance

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Introduction

For few years VSE was coordinating two different Centres of Excellence: one on the 116006 helplines and one on support at a distance. For this year's workshop, some participants were consulted during online meetings to hear about their priorities and their views on the workshop. Following these discussions, the decision was made to merge the two workshops in a single one as 116 helplines and support at a distance share the same challenges and practices.

VSE, Weisser Ring and APAV co-organised the event which took place from 5 to 7 December 2018, in Mainz, Germany.

It is important to recall that VSE does not exist for itself, it exists for and with its members organisations. VSE receives its knowledge from the field from its members which are at the frontline and in direct contact with victims of crime. As members are located in different countries and may be in contact with different groups of victims, they all have different experiences and challenges to share. The Centre of Excellence is a place for VSE members to share their knowledge, experiences, good and bad practices on different issues related to 116 helplines and distance support.

This year's workshop focused mostly on three broad topics: victims with disabilities, cross borders victims and campaigning and outreach. A session on GDPR and data protection and collection was scheduled but cancelled due to technical reasons.

The workshop gathered 20 participants from 13 different organisations.

Participants

Sofia Barlind	Victim Support Sweden	Sweden
Bianca Biwer	Weisser Ring	Germany
Nuno Catarino	APAV	Portugal
Ricardo Estrela	APAV	Portugal
Jolena Flett	Victim Support Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland
Tobias Graen	Weisser Ring	Germany
Aleksandra Ivankovic	VSE	
Sonja Leferink	Slachtofferhulp Nederland	The Netherlands
Léa Meindre-Chautrand	VSE	
Martina Meliskova	Bily kruh bezpeci	Czech Republic
Michele Puckhaber	Crime Victims Helpline	Ireland
Titta Räsänen	Rikosuhripäivystys	Finland
Siobhan Riley	Weisser Ring	Germany
Bejan Šaćiri	Victimology Society of Serbia	Serbia
Gerlinde Schmidt	Weisser Ring	Germany
Maja Štahan	Victim and Witness Support Croatia	Croatia
Mari Tikerpuu	Social Insurance Board	Estonia
Helgard van Hüllen	Weisser Ring	Germany
Barbara Wuesten	Weisser Ring	Germany
Maria Yanshina	Victim Support Foundation Russia	Russia

Session 1 Victims with disabilities

The European Accessibility Act – Aleksandra Ivankovic

In December 2015, the European Commission presented a proposal for a Directive with the aim to improve the functioning of the internal market while removing barriers for the free movement of products and services, making them accessible to citizens with disabilities and/or functional limitations. The EU and its Member States have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. As such they have committed to create a legislative framework for accessibility in line with Article 9 of the Convention. The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities interpreted Article 9 in the following terms: products and services must be **accessible to all**, of **universal design**, and information and communication should be available in **easy-to-read formats and augmentative and alternative modes**.



Accessibility is understood as a quality and includes for a service to be:

- **Easy to be reached or entered:** the facilities are easily accessed by people with disabilities, helplines are available, chatrooms, different ways to reach out the service (WhatsApp, Viber, Messenger, specialist apps), etc.;
- **Easy to obtain or to use:** memorable and free of charge, flexible opening hours, accessible in different languages, accessible for minorities, verbal and body languages used when in contact with victims;
- **Easily understood or appreciated :** easy to read, user friendly, child friendly.

The European Accessibility Act sets out requirements to make a number of products and services more accessible. The list includes, amongst others: ticketing and check-in machines, ATMs and other payment terminals, PCs and operating systems, smartphones, tablets and TV equipment, consumer banking services, e-books and dedicated software, e-commerce, air, bus, rail and waterborne passenger transport services, including real-time travel information.

The important thing is to ensure that **everyone gets the support they need in an appropriate manner and channel**. A combination of video, chat, email, in person support, smartphone application, helpline should be available to make victims' support accessible to everyone. Some organisations may choose to undergo an **accessibility audit** by an external actor.

Reaching out the hearing impaired victims, Siobhan Riley and Tobias Grän, Weisser Ring

There are approximately 80 000 deaf people in Germany who use sign language as a means of communication. **The world of the hearing and the world of the deaf are two separate worlds** and the support system is not designed for the special group of deaf victims. Because of cultural identity, deaf people would rather turn themselves to their community and not to victim support services. There are several information centres for the deaf in Germany (Website of German Deaf Association, Special service for deaf people in working life, hobs for social counselling etc.) but there is no nationwide centre for deaf people victims of violence. If they come to victim support services, they

would need an interpreter, if they cannot pay for it they need to rely on family members and friends which constitutes a challenge.

Weisser Ring started a **pilot project in 2017** to extend its services to the special group of deaf victims. The objectives of the project are to implement the lessons learned from the training seminars, to establish a network with locally organised deaf associations, and to identify target group-oriented victim needs. The long-term goals are the development of a procedure for the practical work of Weisser Ring when in contact with deaf victims through the preparation of guidelines and information materials.



Two important concepts: accessibility and reasonable accommodation.

- **Accessibility** is a legal requirement, you need to make your services accessible with people with disabilities (access ramp, documentation in easy-to-read language etc.)
- **Reasonable accommodation** is not a legal requirement. It is any change to an environment that allows a person with a disability to apply for a job, perform job functions, or enjoy equal access to benefits available to other individuals.

It is possible to receive support from tech companies to have access to more tools to contact and be visible by victims with disabilities.

GOOD PRACTICES

APAV is associated with the portal for deaf citizens in Portugal which provides different online services for deaf people. Deaf people victims of a crime can contact APAV via this platform by using Skype.

Victim Support Sweden has an accessible website including sign language and video accessible for people with disabilities. They work with national associations on disability rights.

Weisser Ring works with German associations for the deaf. Some volunteers have experience with deaf people through their personal and family background.

CHALLENGES

In Russia, it is difficult to reach out to the deaf community and make them contact Victim Support as they prefer to turn to their community, they do not respond well to the campaigns.

Germany: relationship and cooperation with the police at the local level. Example of deaf parents with child missing, before the child was the translator, it was difficult for them to get and provide information to police and support service.

General challenge of isolation of deaf community. Importance of inclusion.

Session 2 Cross border victims

Innovative practices in the provision of cross border services and distance support, Alesandra Ivankovic, VSE

VSE presented its project proposal to develop an App for cross borders victims with 30 different partners including the Bavarian police, police of Flanders, Spain, Greece. The idea is to make it an European and global initiative. The project is to develop an IT tool that would enable law enforcement agencies and victims to access their case files when they return to their country. The biggest challenge would remain GDPR requirements and constraints. VSE would be interested to see if some member organisations are willing to identify victims to test this tool.

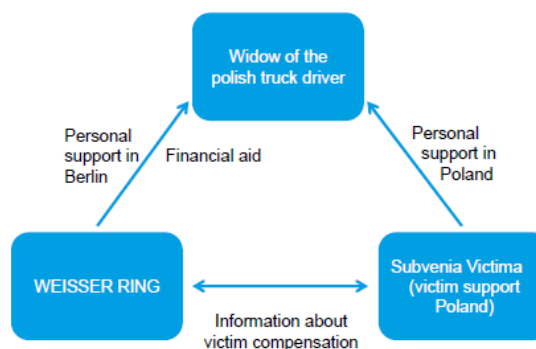
Distance support to victims of terrorism attacks, Bianca Biwer, Weisser Ring

Weisser Ring presented its response to foreign victims and victims' families living abroad after the Berlin terrorist attack. On 19th December 2016 a truck was deliberately driven into the Christmas market at Breitscheidplatz in Berlin, leaving 12 people dead and 56 others injured. The situation was very chaotic as there was no structure in place on how to deal with a terrorist attack. Weisser Ring provided a broad range of support for victims, foreign victims, family members from financial support to administrative support in dealing with national entities and understand the German bureaucracy.

Weisser Ring's work is done by volunteers in 420 branches. One of the first challenges was to guarantee that branches and regional offices could be reached by phone even in the event of higher call volume. Weisser Ring was able to provide quick financial aid with minimal bureaucracy to victims and family members. Another challenge was the high intensity of information transfer. It was important to make sure that all volunteers received updated information (about compensation law, funding available, practical information etc.) to ensure victims receive the relevant information at the right moment. Continuous contact was made with local crisis management team, authorities, network partners in the Germany aid network and with VSE. Support was also provided for Weisser Ring helpers to deal with the high intensity and sensitivity of information.

In total, Weisser Ring supported more than 80 victims, dependants of those who died and eyewitnesses. More than 150 000 euros of financial aid were provided, including: immediate aid, help in the case of loss of earnings, recreational measures. Weisser Ring also provided a long term support for victims and dependants of those who died. They organised meetings in Berlin with relatives of victims who died which created a very strong community feeling.

Case example of supporting foreign victims:



Groundwork for dealing with cases of emergency:

- Raising awareness
- Defining structures and processes: No matter how well you are prepared it will still be chaos. But having a planned structure for everyone is important. Prepare it in the period of peace, when the situation comes there is too much chaos with other things.
- Spreading knowledge within our organisation: good to have the plan but people need to be aware about it.
- Driving additional networking forward: network specific for partners within the terrorist attack. Network on national level, also in regional and in the city.

Weisser Ring identified **4 strengths** of its work in the aftermath of a terrorist attack:

- Weisser Ring has branch offices throughout Germany,
- Quick financial aid with minimal bureaucracy
- The voluntary structure allows the individual needs of the victims to be taken into account
- Good implication and cooperation with VSE network

GOOD PRACTICES

France Victimes has an immediate response to mass victimisation with one phone line that operates the entire response and gives all the information needed.

Slachtofferhulp Nederland is the first respondent in case of mass victimisation. Within 2 hours, they can use a website with a public and private space and give family member and victims access to it to receive information.

Spanish victim associations reach out to previous victims when another terrorist attack happen to prevent potential re-victimization

CHALLENGES

In Russia, everything is running by the State. If a mass victimisation happens, they do not accept anyone else to work on it. If something happens outside of Russia, VSOs try to contact the consular but often they do not receive any answer and VSOs are not invited to participate.

In Ireland, VSOs are not invited at the table. When they plan their emergency services VSE are not involved. If something happens there will be nothing planned for the victims.

Distance support in compensation claims for cross border victims, Barbara Wüsten, Weisser Ring

The 2004/80 Directive relating to compensation to crime victims ensures that all EU Member States have a **national scheme in place which guarantees appropriate compensation to victims of crime**. The Directive also ensures that compensation is easily accessible. Accordingly, Member States should create national systems for cooperation between relevant national authorities. The aims of the Directive are:

- To set up a system of cooperation to help victims of crime get compensation in situations regardless of where in the European Union (EU) the crime was committed.
- The system operates on the basis of EU countries' national compensation schemes for victims of violent intentional crime committed on their own territories.

Every Member State should therefore establish an 'assisting authority'. In Germany the assisting authority provides information, transmits applications and any supporting documents to the 'deciding authority', receive correspondence from the deciding authority and assist when questioning of victim or other witness is necessary. More information on EU compensation scheme can be found [here](#).

The participants worked in small groups to discuss compensation schemes in their country. The main outcome of the discussion was that each country has a different compensation scheme. An idea would be to work on the establishment of a EU-wide compensation scheme.

Action points:

- Think about developing a cross border victims section on VSE intranet with:
 - o Interactive questionnaire to find out if a victim is eligible for compensation and to know to whom to refer the victim
 - o A list of contact details of relevant bodies to contact in each country, compensation authority, lawyers, victim support organisations etc.
- Liaison officer in each VSE organisation to be a focal point and be able to contact for cross border victims, not only in the context of terrorism.

Session 3 Outreach and awareness raising, campaigning to better reach out to victims

Development of a campaign and its consequences in term of impact – Ricardo Estrela and Nuno Catarino, APAV

APAV combines online and in office support through its '**integrated system of support at a distance**'. APAV uses several online self-help tools such as: website, monthly newsletter, informative App and social networks. Information on the rights of victims of crime are displayed in police stations and courts.

Social networks are an important platform to reach out to as many victims as possible, but also to inform the general public. The general objectives of support and information through the internet are to engage with the community, the increase the recognition of APAV's brand and mission, to inform about the proximity of support services, to disseminate prevention and awareness raising campaigns and inform the community about APAV's activities, donations and volunteering, and direct contact with victims of crime.

The online platforms available to contact APAV are Facebook messenger, Instagram, Twitter, emails, and Skype.

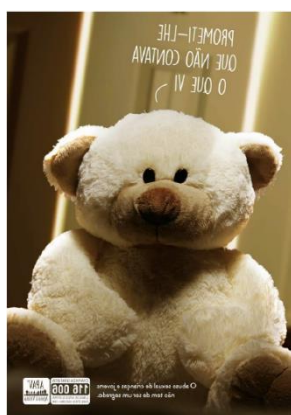
APAV uses *Clientscape*, a software that allows APAV staff to review and differentiate the comments and messages sent via Facebook and Instagram. Specific answers are available and there is a possibility to give importance rating to the message for other colleagues to immediately see the message. This technological solution promotes quicker responses to the support/information requests. It is also easier to manage and track the communication made by the same follower or victim through different channels. It allows to visualise the previous interaction/responses for that same follower or victim, with a historic of conversation.

The objectives of APAV online support through Facebook Messenger are: answering the doubts/questions, informing and explaining what and where are APAV's local services, and encouraging victims to call victim support workers via APAV Helpline.

Within an integrated and blended approach, Skype can also be combined with face-to-face and phone support sessions by APAV Victim Support Offices and Specialised Networks in specific support cases for the provision of continuous support and as a follow up.



APAV promotes the online and offline support via posters, social media, video etc. APAV tries to reach different victims from different communities at the national level by developing specific campaigns targeting different victims: children victim of sexual abuse, women victims of domestic violence, elder people victim of abuse, men victims of domestic violence, etc.:



The key idea when developing a campaign is to sign all materials with the **organisation logo** because people identify APAV with its logo. APAV also adds the helpline logo to all communication materials, online and offline. The important thing is to focus on people, not on the service. In each campaign, there is a 'way out', it can be the helpline number, APAV website etc.

Steps when developing a campaign:

- Establish goals and objectives
- Define the message
- Define the target
- Select the media: if younger generation think about social media.
- Define the budget
- Benchmarking: analyse the work of other organisations
- Develop the creative approach and design : get support from advertising companies that work pro bono.

- Create action plans : follow timeline and assign accountabilities for each person
- Gather the partners : communication agencies, media, press etc.
- Implement the campaign

To measure the results of a campaign APAV measures the number of calls and online interactions on social media such as likes, shares, comments etc. They also receive formal and informal feedbacks from volunteers and victims.

Conclusion

All participants expressed their satisfaction about the 2-day workshop. Some participants highlighted the fact they would have preferred two separate workshops on 116006 helplines and support at a distance. Some of them would have preferred smaller groups of discussion, with more presentations and more interactions.

Regarding the content of the workshop, participants expressed their interest in the following topics: GDPR, cross borders victims, fundraising and budgeting, transition from national helpline to 116 number, and peer to peer support.

A suggestion was made to have a separate meeting before VSE Annual Conference in Strasbourg in June 2019 to share resources, good and bad practices.

Follow up action points:

- VSE intranet should contain information on compensation in each country, with contact details of person in charge of compensation in each organisation.
- VSE to draft a survey/questionnaire to set out conditions for compensation in each country. Dissemination to VSE members in early 2019.
- Think about developing an online interactive questionnaire to find out if a cross border victim is eligible for compensation in a specific country
- Organise a separate meeting before the 2019 Annual Conference on 116 and support at a distance.