

VSE GENERAL MEETING 2025

3rd December 2025, 14.00 - 17:00 (CET)

Held: Online (Zoom)

Minutes

KEY		
Petra Klein	PK	Vice-President
Levent Altan	LA	Executive Director
Aleksandra Ivankovic	AI	Deputy Director
Keti Varoshlija-Botterman	KVB	HR and Administrative Officer
Efthymis Antonopoulos	EA	Junior Policy Manager
Marina Kazakova	MZ	Junior Communication Manager

Opening and Welcome by Petra Klein

Vice-President PK opened the General Meeting by welcoming all participants and thanking them for their continued commitment to strengthening victim support across Europe. She underlined that 2025 has been an extraordinary and decisive year for victims' rights, both for VSE and for Europe more broadly.

PK recalled that, at the start of the year, VSE committed to ensuring that 2025 would not become "just another year", but a turning point, coinciding with several important anniversaries: 35 years of European victims' rights and 40 years of the UN Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power.

She highlighted the achievements of the "2025 – Year of Victims' Rights" campaign, including the anniversary of the European Day for Victims of Crime; the Annual Conference in Lisbon and the "More Than Words" event at the United Nations.

PK also emphasised the structural progress made in 2025: advancing discussions on an EU Strategy on Victims' Rights, strengthened cooperation with Member States and EU institutions, and an expanded VSE policy and advocacy portfolio, including contributions to more than ten EU consultation frameworks across areas such as EU funding, digital safety, civil society, equality strategies, democracy protection, internal security and tourism.

She noted that 2025 has also strengthened VSE internally, with preparations for a membership policy review and important groundwork for the organisation's future.

PK concluded by stressing that, as VSE moves into 2026, the task is to transform the momentum of 2025 into long-term, measurable change. In this context, she underlined the importance of the vote on the VSE Strategy 2026–2030 later in the meeting, which will guide the organisation’s work in the coming five years.

Minutes from previous meeting:

LA introduced the item and invited members to review the minutes of the Annual General Meeting of 21st May 2025, held in Lisbon. He went through the document and offered participants the opportunity to raise comments or propose corrections.

No comments or corrections were raised.

The minutes of the AGM of 21st May 2025 were approved.

Presentation of new VSE Staff Members

KVB presented the new VSE staff members, noting that VSE has continued to grow in recent years, both in terms of activities and team size. This growth is expected to continue in the coming year.

KVB thanked all new colleagues for their introductions and welcomed them officially to the team.

LV mentioned the creation of a new structural organigram of the team, in order to see in a much more efficient way who works on what.

Membership Updates – Presentation of new members

AI presented an overview of VSE’s membership and introduced two organisations that have recently joined VSE as associated members.

She recalled that VSE’s network continues to grow and diversify and highlighted the following new members:

- **Cyprus Third Age Observatory – Cyprus**

A non-profit organisation established in 2015 to advance the rights, dignity and well-being of older people across Cyprus. As a national actor supporting elderly victims of abuse, violence and exploitation, it delivers a broad range of services, including legal, psychological and emotional support, information and referral, and liaison with the justice system and social services. A representative of the organisation (Demos) introduced their work and priorities.

- **Katambayi Tshiminyi Association – Belgium / Democratic Republic of the Congo**

A Belgium-based non-profit organisation created in 2015 with a mission to provide holistic support to victims of violence and vulnerable populations, both in Belgium and in the DRC. The Association presented its activities and focus areas, including community-based support and cross-border work with vulnerable communities.

AI welcomed the new members and noted that their expertise will further strengthen VSE’s capacity to support diverse groups of victims across Europe and beyond.

Board Elections

KVB introduced the item on Board elections and explained the voting process in line with the VSE Constitution.

For this General Meeting, members were invited to vote on:

- the re-election of Rosa Jansen as President
- the re-election of Julianne Attard as Board Member.

KVB noted that both candidates were unable to attend the meeting but had sent short video messages.

She recalled that all full members had received a voting paper in advance of the meeting and explained that each full member has one vote (yes / no / abstention).

Following the voting procedure and the counting of ballots, KVB announced that both candidates had received the required majority of votes from the full members present and eligible to vote.

Outcome:

- RJ was re-elected as President of VSE.
- JA was re-elected as Board Member.

Update on Finances

AI presented an update on VSE's finances, providing an overview of the financial situation and outlook. She referred members to the financial documentation circulated in advance of the meeting for detailed figures on income, expenditure and reserves.

She highlighted the main points regarding:

- the implementation of the current budget and project portfolio;
- the balance between staff costs and other operational costs;
- co-financing requirements linked to existing and new EU-funded projects; and
- the anticipated funding landscape, including opportunities and risks.

AI underlined the importance of maintaining a cautious and strategic approach to financial planning, ensuring that VSE can deliver on its objectives while preserving financial sustainability. Members were invited to raise questions or comments.

An overview of the OG budget was presented.

Projects that started later than planned will have an impact on the year-end financial results; however, we have a good budget provision despite the current balance.

We expect to close the 2025 financial year with a small surplus, continuing the trend of financial stability. New support in the finance team will help to provide detailed reporting for the year-end closing.

VSE Activities 2026 – Strategy

LA presented VSE's key priorities and the activities planned for 2026, aligned with the draft **VSE Strategy 2026–2030**.

He outlined the main strategic objectives and explained how these will translate into concrete workstreams across VSE's departments, including:

- promoting the implementation of victims' rights and reducing disparities in access to support across Europe;
- strengthening national victim support systems and cooperation with public authorities and civil society;
- expanding advocacy and policy work at EU and international levels, including follow-up to the revised Victims' Rights Directive;
- consolidating internal structures, governance, and membership engagement to prepare VSE for the next decade.

Strategy Timeline was presented by EA and Summary of Member Feedback – Key Messages:

- **Balance between all victims and targeted expertise**

Members strongly supported maintaining VSE's commitment to all victims of crime while developing deeper expertise in specific areas such as terrorism, cybercrime, gender-based violence, and domestic violence. The expectation was to focus where VSE adds most value while ensuring no group is left behind.

- **Cybercrime and online victimisation**

Members identified online fraud, phishing, AI-driven exploitation and transnational digital crime as fast-growing concerns. They highlighted the need for new tools and partnerships, including engagement with technology companies and global actors.

- **Victims with disabilities and accessibility**

Major gaps persist in accessible information and services. Stronger cooperation with disability rights organisations at EU and broader European levels was encouraged.

- **Hate crime and intersectionality**

Hate crime emerged as a pressing concern, particularly due to its intersection with the victimisation of migrants, minorities, and LGBTQIA+ persons.

- **Children, young people, and family members**

Members emphasised the need to better address the specific challenges faced by children and young people—both in justice systems and online—and to give more explicit attention to the needs of family members.

- **Cross-cutting themes**

- **Safe Justice** reaffirmed as a guiding principle to prevent secondary victimisation.
- **National Frameworks** recognised as essential for coordinated and sustainable victim support.
- **Accessibility** to be embedded across services rather than addressed through additional victim categories.
- **AI** identified as both a risk (technology-facilitated crime) and an opportunity (innovative support tools).
- Strong expectation that VSE continues to act as a **pan-European voice**, including through deeper cooperation beyond the EU, especially with the Council of Europe.

Strategic Context and Vision

LA recalled that over the past five years, VSE's main focus had been to establish a solid policy framework. The next five years will mark a transition to a new phase centred on **implementation**. With stronger

resources now available, VSE aims to foster substantive change on the ground—both in the way victims are treated and in how they access support systems.

He highlighted the importance of supporting service providers to work in a coordinated manner and stressed that the vision is to combine transformation of EU law with meaningful change in key public policies.

EA presented the new strategy on a month-by-month basis (as reflected in the meeting slides). A draft set of strategic objectives had been presented to the Board earlier and shared with all members prior to the AGM for discussion and adoption.

The Strategy seeks to maintain support for all victims while developing targeted expertise in specific areas such as terrorism, hate crime, disability, migration, and safe access to justice. The drafting process included continuous dialogue with members to ensure alignment with VSE's objectives and emerging priorities.

Strategic objectives 2026-2030

AE explained that the strategy will be implemented through seven objectives:

1. Facilitate the implementation of victims' law and promote the strengthening of victims' rights.
2. Mainstream victims' rights by enhancing multi-sectoral engagement and coordination.
3. Amplify victims' voices and engagement, while fostering a culture of respect and solidarity with victims.
4. Maximise access to high-quality support for all victims.
5. Pursue victims' issues and victim-centred solutions in the wider world.
6. Build individual resilience frameworks and strengthen responses to terrorism and mass victimisation.
7. Strengthen VSE's organisational capacity and influence.

This strategy reflects what members have clearly expressed: the need to further strengthen victims' rights.

2026 Campaigns

MK presented three campaigns planned for 2026:

- **116 Helpline**
- **NextGen Victim Support:** best practices from frontline services
- **NextGen Tech for Victim Support:** a tech fair to showcase how innovation and technology can prevent, respond to and address crime

MK explained how these three campaigns are linked to the seven strategic priorities, will reinforce VSE's leadership, and will demonstrate how VSE delivers support for victims of crime.

The first campaign has already been launched in November. Marina invited members to sign the pledge for the 116 campaign to express interest in those Member States where the line is not yet operational. LA emphasised the importance of the 116 helpline and called on members to engage with stakeholders and the public. He indicated that VSE should aim for 10,000 signatures in support of the 116 petition, in order to show EU institutions and the wider public how crucial this helpline is.

Voting and Approval of VSE Strategy 2026–2030

KVB introduced the voting procedure for the approval of the VSE Strategy 2026–2030.

She recalled that, according to the VSE Constitution, each full member has one vote, while associate and supporter members do not have voting rights. She confirmed that 13 out of 15 full members were represented, meaning that the quorum was met. The required majority for approval of the Strategy was 7.

The vote was conducted live using the “raise hand” function on the online platform. Full members eligible to vote were invited to raise their hands and keep them raised until the counting was completed.

Ten full members raised their virtual hands. Three members did not manage to use the “raise hand” function (including Victim Support Malta and Denmark), but confirmed their support in the chat. In total, 13 votes in favour were recorded.

Voting Outcome:

After counting the votes, KVB confirmed that the VSE Strategy 2026–2030 had received the required majority of votes from the full members present and entitled to vote.

- The **VSE Strategy 2026–2030 was approved.**

Closing Remarks

PK closed the meeting by thanking all members, staff and speakers for their active participation, valuable contributions and continuous commitment to victims’ rights.

She briefly outlined the key events planned for 2026:

- The **European Day for Victims of Crime on 20 February 2026**, to be held at the Brussels Press Club and dedicated to promoting the **116 006 Helpline**.
- The **Annual Conference in Paris** in June 2026, focusing on frontline support and the implementation of the revised Victims’ Rights Directive.
- The new initiative **“Technology for Safer Communities”**, to be piloted in November 2026 as a Tech Fair / Tech Forum, bringing together practitioners, innovators and policymakers, with close cooperation foreseen with the Irish Presidency.

PK emphasised that 2026 will be a busy and strategically important year for VSE and underlined the importance of continuing to work together to ensure that victims’ rights are respected, protected, supported and enforced in practice.

She wished all participants a peaceful end to the year and looked forward to continued cooperation in 2026.

The meeting was closed.