

## VSE GENERAL MEETING 2024

22/11/2024, 10:00 – 13:00 CEST

Online Meeting

### Minutes

KEY		
Rosa Jansen	RJ	President
Petra Klein	PK	Vice-President
Carmen Rasquete	CR	Treasurer
Levent Altan	LA	Executive Director
Aleksandra Ivankovic	AI	Deputy Director
Keti Varoshlija-Botterman	KVB	Junior Administrative Officer
Marina Kazakova	MK	Senior Communications Officer

#### Welcoming Remarks by VSE President Rosa Jansen

RJ opened the Annual General meeting by expressing her gratitude towards Colleagues and Members who joined, as well as thanking the VSE Team for organising the online event. Looking back at 2024, she shared that it was an incredibly busy year with the focus on **the revision of the VRD and engagement in the EU elections**, to ensure that victims' issues remained at the forefront of the EU's political agenda. RJ highlighted that **building national solutions and enhancing rights on the EU level remain at the core of our agenda**. RJ then outlined the **main activities planned as part of the 2025 Victims' Rights Campaign** – the event celebrating 25 years of European victims' rights in February, the annual conference in May and the joint-event with the UN, celebrating 30 years of the UN Victims' Declaration in November.

#### Minutes from previous meeting

Members voted on the minutes from the 06.06.2023 General Meeting. Minutes were approved with no adjustments.

#### Presentation of new VSE Staff members

KVB introduced the new VSE staff members and noted that VSE is experiencing remarkable growth and expansion of the team which currently includes **27 staff members**, including our contractors, volunteers and interns. This is set to continue in the coming years.

She gave the floor to all staff members present, allowing for a short introduction of their background and main responsibilities at VSE.

### Presentation and short introduction of new VSE members

AI presented the **three new VSE members**, with the help of the representatives from each organisation:

- **Asociacion Victimas Del Terrorismo (AVT)**, is a Spanish non-profit organisation, working to improve the rights and the situation of direct victims of terrorism;
- **Accompaniment Support Services for Children (ASSC)**, is an Irish organisation addressing the needs of children and young people and their families as they navigate the criminal justice system;
- **European Centre of Studies and Initiatives (CESIE)**, is an Italian organisation with a rights and justice unit focused specifically on the promotion of gender equality in all social and political spheres, supporting the psychological well-being of young people and minority communities, supporting victims of gender-based violence, migrant women and victims of human trafficking.

### Update on Finances by VSE Treasurer, Carmen Rasquete

CR presented VSE's financial position as of October 2024. She explained that there is 22% of remaining budget which is intended to be spent on activities that build at the end of the year – staff exchange, staff costs and EUCVT. She reported on three action grants that are related to the increase of the budget – INVICTUS, NO OBLIVION and IMPACT. Specifically, IMPACT will bring in a major financial contribution from DG REFORM's Technical Support Instrument (TSI).

CR noted that we are going to end this year with **a positive result**, with between 5.000 and 10.000 EUR of surplus, allowing to increase the VSE's reserves. The budget estimation for 2025 is over 2.6 million EUR, which already grants the year to be covered financially.

CR informed that during the last Executive Board meeting, the Board approved the latest version of the financial policy which includes detailed information on what is governance and oversight, how budget reporting and monitoring is done, how budget execution is managed and what are the risk management and transparency measures.

### Voting and Approval of Audit

KVB explained that we received 3 proposals and after reviewing review by the Board, the best auditor for VSE was selected based on transparency, accountability and security measures of the company, as well as

their experience in the non-profit sector, competitive price, liability and compliance. She explained that all members has receive recommendation letter prepared by the Board giving more information on the AUDITOR. In light of this, KVB explained the voting process and conducted the voting.

**11 full members voted for “YES”, 1 abstained; the auditor was elected to perform audits for the next 3 years. The member who first abstained from voting, changed their answer to “YES”,** after familiarising themselves with the background documents.

### Key Events and Activities Planned for 2025

MK presented VSE’s plans related to the events and activities for 2025. **The campaign will launch on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February**, the website is still being populated and **all promotional materials will be communicated to members by the end of December** to adjust them to their national contexts and decide in what ways our campaign gives credibility to their actions. The recently-published [article on Brussels Times](#) was referred to as an in-depth explanation of the campaign.

MK highlighted the three milestone events planned for the upcoming year:

1. **EU day for Victims of Crime** – our event for this occasion will be proceeded by the BeneVict final conference to bring as many members and partners to Brussels for both events.
2. **Annual Conference** – taking place in Lisbon, 22-23 May. The registration will be open from the 11<sup>th</sup> of December to allow members to anticipate their travels and apply for funding.
3. **Campaign closing event** – co-hosted with the UN at the end of November. It will take place in Brussels, with a more international scope and participation expected.

MK highlighted that, in between the events, joint online actions will take place. We are currently preparing editable materials; toolkits will be shared with all members before the end of December. The material will include monthly spotlights – we aim to have each month dedicated to one specific victims’ right and present the situation in member states thanks to the evidence from BeneVict.

### VSE Working Groups

AI presented the VSE’s working groups, open for members’ participation. Currently, there are 5 active WGs:

1. **Helpline standards WG:** developing standards for the victims’ helplines. Standards have been agreed by the WG, final meeting will take place in December. In 2025, we will work together with the Centre of Excellence to prepare guidelines for members and future providers.

2. **Full members WG:** set up based on an initiative of full members to discuss issues that are of particular relevance to victim support organisations.
3. **AI WG:** aims to explore how AIM impacts the work of victim support organisations. On the one hand, AI's role in perpetration of crime and victimisation. On the other hand, how it can be used to facilitate the work of victim support organisations.
4. **Communicators network:** group of comms experts working on victims' rights.
5. **Trainers' network:** bringing together experts who work on trainings of all kinds, involving external trainers who might support this work.

2 WGs are currently in preparation:

1. **Victims' platform:** bringing together victims and victims' advocates to support the work of VSE. Making sure that the activities we develop are informed by consultations with victims.
2. **Youth platform:** engaging with young victims and young people who may become victim support professionals; understanding the generational shift in victim support.

### VSE Strategy

LA informed that our current VSE Strategy will be reviewed. Members are to be a part of consultation process to agree on the vision, mission, values and strategic priorities of the document. As part of these consultations, all participants were moved to online Breakout Rooms to discuss with VSE staff (groups were led by LA, AI and Efthymis Antonopoulos) to discuss some preliminary questions related to the drafting of the new strategy. The goal was to think about the strategy and collect first feedback. Next steps will be putting together consultation methodology and engagement methodology.

**NOTE:** Break out rooms discussion available in ANNEX of this minutes

### Closing Remarks by VSE Vice President Petra Klein

PK thanked everyone for their active participation and meaningful contributions. She looked ahead at the next major gathering in February 2025.

## ANNEX

### Break out Rooms – Room 1 AGM

22-11-2024

**Mission and Vision** – participants agreed that the current version of the mission/vision statements suit the organisation well.

**Involvement of VSE members in the development of the Strategy** – mixed approach (i.e. face-to-face interviews, questionnaires, consultations, etc.)

**Involvement of young people** – willingness to actively engage and seek to incorporate input from young people. Mainly because:

- Expertise in technology and innovative perspectives
- Role as the future decision-makers and contribution to the organization's vision
- Younger generations are the future – need to integrate in the strategic planning their distinct way of thinking and evolving needs

**Focus on Thematic areas** – explore tendencies in victimology and use plain language to avoid narrowing the scope too much, as this may exclude some victims/organizations. It is important to maintain a balance between specific focus areas and addressing broader topics to maintain inclusivity.

### Break out Rooms – Room 2 AGM

22-11-2024

The short session focused on the draft strategy for 2026-2030 and aimed to clarify members' expectations and gather input on the network's growth and development.

#### Q1. Do you think it is worth revising the overall mission and values of VSE?

**Does the current vision align with the strategic direction planned for the next five years? What should be prioritised?**

**A Europe in a world where the needs of all victims of crime are fully met through effective rights and high quality services. (Mission)**

Martyn Herward and Leena-Kaisa Abergä agreed that this definition is quite inclusive, accommodating various areas of intervention, and does not require substantial changes at this time.

Sofia Barlind concurred with the previous speakers, noting that while the vision is quite self-explanatory, there should be a stronger emphasis on execution and implementation.

Karl mentioned that while the current definition is satisfactory, much work remains to be done on a practical level. He emphasised the importance of targeting more governments and the judiciary, who are directly involved with victims. Drawing from his experience in Poland, he noted that many victims are still hesitant to report crimes.

Eftymis stressed the importance of ensuring that rules and guidelines are effectively implemented. He suggested creating more opportunities for victims by encouraging governments to actively reach out to them. Recognising that victims may feel scared, VSE should advocate for police and officials to be more proactive in their support. In the coming month, consultations will take place with different members to discuss specific aspects of the strategy.

Lastly, it was noted that collecting victims' complaints or stories is crucial for supporting evidence-based policy, which is likely to have a greater impact on decision makers. Karl said that he will gather such testimonies from now on.

To achieve this Vision, VSE's mission is to drive change on victims' issues and support of the delivery of victims' services whilst operating sustainably and growing our capability. (Values)

Efthymis asked members whether they would like the mission to be more detailed.

Leena-Kaisa Abergä stated that the mission should be concise, while the strategy should be more detailed. It is essential to include key aspects, such as building capacities in areas where Victim Support is not yet performing optimally (at different level: regional, national, international). Even in countries like Finland, financial cuts are impacting services. It is crucial to prioritise the safeguarding of standards and capacity building.

Martyn Herward cautioned against changing the mission, stating that it effectively fulfils its purpose. He suggested that it could be articulated more clearly. Specifically, he pointed out that it lacks detail regarding the specific services and support provided to victims.

#### **Q2: Should VSE change its geographical focus in the coming five-year period?**

Efthymis highlighted the importance of maintaining a global perspective while also focusing on Europe. For instance, in the last few months VSE has participated in UN events as regional experts.

Martyn Herward pointed out the need to clarify the distinction between Europe and the EU, to ensure that full members outside the EU remain fully engaged. He agreed on the fact that the global dimension has gained more significance in recent years.

Leena-Kaisa Abergä stressed that the primary focus should be on Europe, mainly due to time constraint.

Sofia Barlind supported Leena's viewpoint, highlighting the need to concentrate on implementing strategies in member countries and considering ideas from other organisations to enhance members' efforts.

Efthymis concluded by highlighting the importance of finding common grounds with other regions while maintain the European focus.

#### **Q3: How would you like (as members) to be consulted to ensure full engagement?**

Karl expressed a preference for online consultations, emphasising the importance of preparing documents in advance for these types of meetings.

Sofia Barlind shared her experience with strategy development, highlighting the involvement of coordinators and board members from local organisations in sessions. She noted the value of in-person meetings, particularly during the VSE conference, to facilitate collaboration.

Martyn Herward found that working groups are very useful, and online meetings have proven effective due to their flexibility in accommodating different times and locations.

Efthymis mentioned that a draft strategy will be shared during the final conference, incorporating all ideas and inputs gathered, with plans for finalisation in the summer.

#### **Q4: Except for adult victims, should VSE also include youth in the consultations (especially in light of the upcoming launch of the youth platform this year)?**

Everyone agreed on this point. The head office will prepare a guidance document to address this inclusion.

#### **Q5: Should VSE focus on a specific topic or target subgroups of victims instead of maintaining a general objective?**

Leena-Kaisa Abergä argued that it would be beneficial to adopt a broader focus rather than narrowing it down to specific topics. She acknowledged that some issues, such as Violence Against Women (VAW), may dominate the agenda but emphasized the importance of not excluding any group of victims.

Diana Úbeda Martínez highlighted the necessity of working at a global level, suggesting that the approach should depend on the types of crime and the nature of the perpetrators.

Sofia Barlind echoed Leena's comment, stressing that all crime victims deserve equal rights and support. She pointed out that every crime should be treated with the same level of seriousness and support, referencing practices in Sweden.

Martyn Herward added that language is crucial in this context; he advocated for using terms like "all crimes" instead of generic phrases. He noted that how the organisation positions itself can significantly impact competition for funding and overall effectiveness.

Lastly, Rosa suggested conducting studies on societal trends to better define strategic elements, ensuring that the organisation's focus remains relevant and impactful in addressing the needs of various victim subgroups.

**Break out Rooms – Room 3 AGM  
22-11-2024**

**Vision of VSE**

Overall all attendees content with the vision and mission of VSE. Suggested the following improvements:

- Increase victim voices with hearing victims as a focus
- Simplify and keep it accessible
- Promote high standards
- Make clear what VSE does (comment that average person may be misguided on the work VSE does)

**Coordination and inclusion in strategy development**

Attendees suggested the following:

- Ensure victims voices are heard and promoted throughout
- Open discussion fora for victim inclusion in strategic planning

**Action**

- Lynnette Bradshaw required VSE policy on inclusion of victims in events/projects/etc.