

# How to ensure safe reporting for migrant victims of sexual violence? A framework for policy and practice

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*in the INHeRE project (Inclusive Holistic Care for Migrant Victims of Sexual Violence)*



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King's College Hospital **NHS**  
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# WHY DO WE NEED A SAFE REPORTING FRAMEWORK?

- Migrant individual are at **high risk of sexual victimisation** (De Schrijver et al., 201)
- Reporting sexual offences is an issue for all victims (Krug et al., 2002) but migrant victims face **additional and specific barriers** in reporting sexual violence (e.g. *Uncertainties around migration status, Fears from deportation, detention or other punishment based on migration status, Uncertainties about procedures*)
- **Gaps in policies and practices** exist whereby especially undocumented migrants of sexual violence are provided the least safety, but **uncertainties and fears exist for all migrants**



# WHAT IS SAFE REPORTING FOR MIGRANT VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

- the possibility for a migrant victim to report sexual violence in safe conditions, having their identity protected from perpetrator(s) and from immigration law enforcement
  - “the freedom to report crimes without fear that one will be punished for coming forward. It requires prioritizing the rights of victims and the safety of communities in situations of vulnerability ahead of the enforcement of immigration rules” (PICUM, 2017. p. 2)
  - provides a legal guarantee that migrant victims will not be subjected to immigration law enforcement (such as deportation, detention, or other types of punishment) when or as a consequence of reporting sexual violence.
- Safe reporting allows all migrant victims of sexual violence, including undocumented migrants, to feel safe at every step of their journey to report (not only the moment of reporting)
- ‚Safe’ does not only refer to a feeling, but also to exercising rights, accessing justice, support, and services free from judgement, discrimination, and disadvantage.



# THE PURPOSE OF THE SAFE REPORTING FRAMEWORK

- The **safe reporting framework** assists professionals to better conceptualise and implement practices of safe reporting, inclusive to all migrant victims of sexual violence.
- It provides a **holistic approach** to safe reporting and **examples of best practices** of SACCs and law enforcement
  - Some practices already exist, some are proposed
- A tool **based on extensive research** and two rounds of **validation** with **victims, SACC staff and law enforcement**



# PUBLICATIONS



Verelst, A., Szelei, N., Clarke, V., Boychenko, O., Linthout, L., & Keygnaert, I., & (2021). *Safe reporting framework for migrant victims of sexual violence*. Ghent University: Ghent.

Available for free in for languages (EN, FR, IT, NL) at:

<https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/8725402>

# DEVELOPMENT OF THE SAFE REPORTING FRAMEWORK

Desk research and stakeholder consultations about policies and practices in Belgium, Ireland, and the UK

Validation study 1: Focus Groups with victims, SACC staff and law enforcement

Adaptation and Finalisation

Dissemination: Safe reporting framework for migrant victims of sexual violence

Developing the initial safe reporting framework

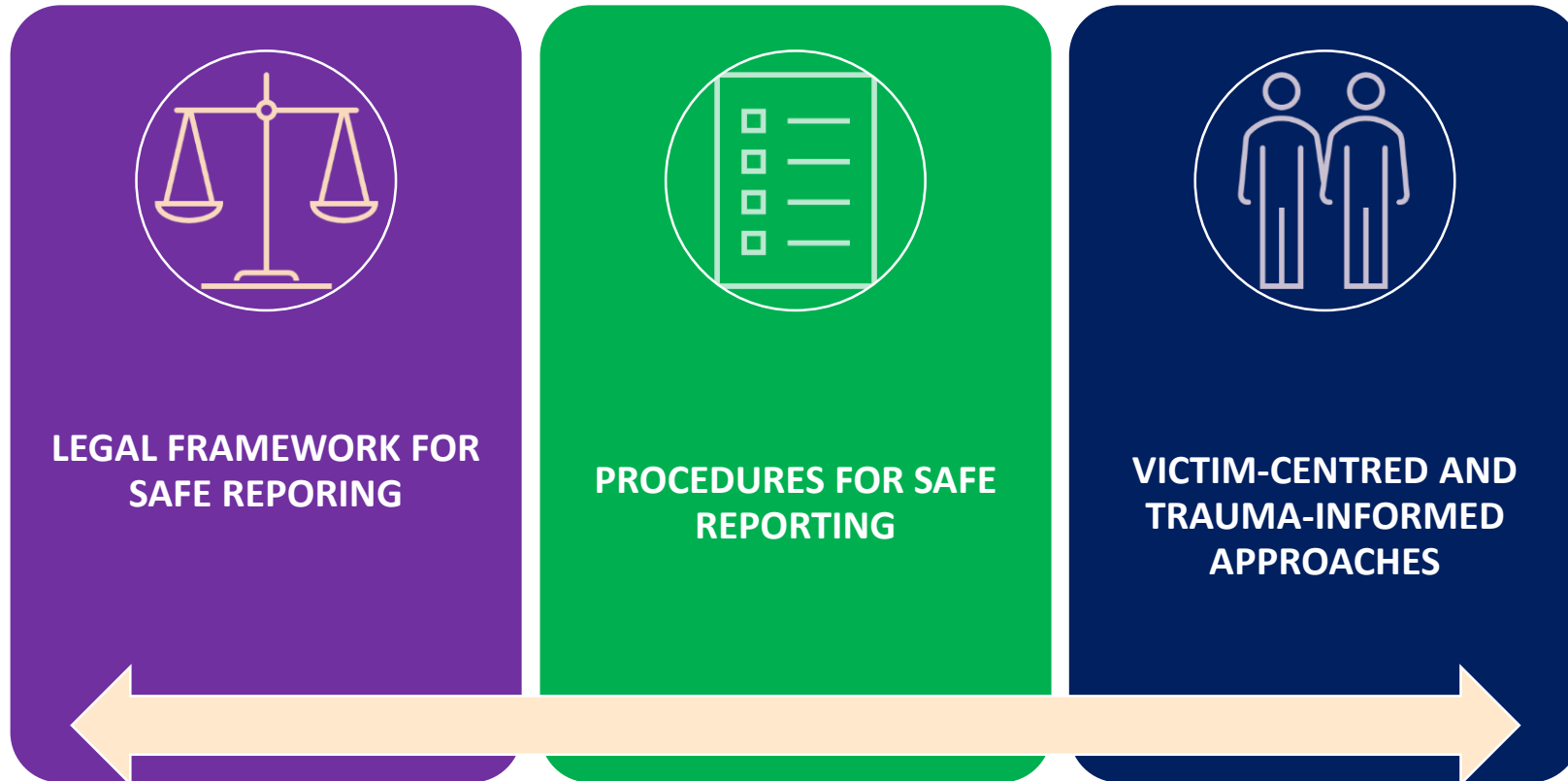
Validation study 2: Filming and testing the safe reporting framework



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# Safe Reporting Framework



Verelst et al. (2021)

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# Legal framework for safe reporting

A law or legislative framework that **delinks reporting sexual violence from immigration law enforcement.**

It ensures that victims who come forward are not subject to immigration law enforcement (deportation, detention, or other punishment on the basis of not having the right documents).

## 1. A formal legal framework should establish a firewall:

- EU law and policy should ensure that any immigration enforcement should only be applied without prejudice to the Victims' Directive.
- This legal framework should be embedded in and complimentary to national legislation

## 2. It provides the legal base for:

- the right to safely report to all migrant victims at all stages of the case: before reporting, when reporting, during criminal proceedings and after a case is closed.
- a base for developing clear guidelines and procedures for all service providers and authorities

## 3. Awareness-raising about rights is equally important





# Procedures for safe reporting

Procedures and processes that make victims feel safe to step forward to report sexual violence and to seek support.

These procedures comply with and ensure the implementation of the legal framework for safe reporting.

Five key procedures in SACCs

1. Awareness-raising
2. Providing information on services, procedures and victims' rights
3. Data management and data sharing
4. Individual needs assessment and protection
5. Providing information about reporting and criminal proceedings



# Victim-centred and trauma-informed approaches

Inter-relational and professional attitudes and behaviours of professionals that are based on victims' needs and an understanding on how trauma can impact victims' lives.

This approach help victims feel safe, welcomed, understood, believed, and supported.

1. Clear Communication
2. Trust and Reassurance
3. Choice and Control
4. Flexibility and Patience
5. Empathy and Dignity



**Safe reporting for migrant victims of sexual violence: Mapping policies in Belgium, Ireland, and the UK**

By Victim Support Europe and Ghent University

Developed in the context of the INHeRE project: inclusive holistic care for refugee and migrant victims of sexual violence in Belgium, Ireland, and the UK

Co-funded by the European Union

**More about safe reporting:**

Boychenko, O., Szelei, N., Le Pavic, G., Shrimpling, R., Linthout, L., Keygnaert, I., & Verelst, A. (2021). *Safe reporting for migrant victims of sexual violence: Mapping policies in Belgium, Ireland, and the UK*. Victim Support Europe, Brussels and Ghent University, Ghent. Available for free at: <https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/8722090/file/8722093.pdf>

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**More about INHeRE:**

<https://www.icrhb.org/nl/projecten/inclusive-holistic-care-for-migrant-victims-of-sexual-violence-inhere>

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