

VSE ETHICAL PARTNERSHIP POLICY

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Introduction

1. Policy Statement

Victim Support Europe works in partnership with a range of organisations and individuals to support all aspects of its work and, where appropriate, to generate income. The objective of this document is to provide guidelines when Victim Support Europe is considering, or is offered, funding or sponsorship opportunities.

Victim Support Europe will:

- ensure that all arrangements add value and support the achievement of the organisation's vision
- be open and transparent in funding agreements
- ensure fully defined criteria to determine funding arrangements
- identify opportunities, obtain appropriate levels of commitment, and evaluate the benefits of these arrangements

2. Definitions

Funding/Sponsorship

Funding, or sponsorship, is a business relationship between VSE and external entities from whom VSE receives monetary or in-kind contribution – either for a specific activity or as a general contribution towards VSE's organisational mission, in exchange for recognition, mention, marketing opportunity or other 'return' of favour as determined by VSE to be a fair exchange for the funding.

Funding/sponsorship can be offered by businesses, governmental bodies, intergovernmental organisations, or other legal entities as well as through individual philanthropic contributions (funding entities).

Funding/sponsorship should benefit the VSE mission and/or be a cost-effective means of achieving the organisation's marketing and communication objectives.

Funding, or sponsorship, is not an ad hoc donation for which little or no return is expected, other than personal recognition (e.g. letter of thanks).

The main difference between funding and a donation is that sponsorship yield a benefit for the external entity, whereas a donation does not, unless it is publicly acknowledged. For example, if a VSE event were to be funded by an entity, which was then endorsed through the event materials, publicity, etc., the entity would act as an event sponsor. However, should that same entity provide funding and not receive endorsement through publicity materials, this would constitute a donation.

Donations received by VSE are managed in line with the organisation's Donations Policy.

The in-kind contribution of personal services by individuals should not be considered a donation but should be governed by VSE's Volunteering Policy.

Commercial contract

A commercial contract is a legally binding document that commits an organisation to either carry out, or **not** engage in, a stated activity. A commercial contract is used by businesses and organisations; its key requirement is that legal arrangements ensure the full benefits of the contract can be realised.

All commercial contracts agreed by VSE will be in a written format and will define the following components:

- Sale of goods, either retail or parts
- Provision of services, such as vendor services and employment
- Use of intellectual property, including patents, trademarks, copyrights, and trade secrets
- The right of any named party to disclose confidential information, or engage in competition
- Lease or purchase of real estate.

Practice Guidance

1. Decision making process

Approval of sponsors and funding entities

VSE will not enter into partnership or receive sponsorship from organisations/individuals whose image, product, or services could be seen to conflict with VSE's mission or values. VSE's long term reputation and credibility must take precedence over short term monetary needs.

Only reputable individuals, organisations, institutions, and corporations whose image, product or services do not conflict with VSE's mission or values may be considered as sponsors or funding entities.

Each potential funding/sponsorship agreement will be considered on its merits; however, good judgement and discretion will characterise the decision-making process, which will always include the following questions:

- **Are there any reputational risks related to VSE's association with the funders/sponsors?**
- **Is there any potential conflict with VSE's values, mission, vision, and objectives that might arise by seeking funding or engagement with the funders/sponsors?**
- **Does the funding/sponsorship support the achievement of VSE's strategic objectives?**

VSE will not enter into partnership with any organisation/individual:

- Where their income or other benefit may result from slave, or child, labour;
- Where there is any suspicion of engagement in discriminatory behaviours and non-ethical practices;
- Who have been known not to promote equal opportunities or diversity;
- Who have been known to promote hatred;
- Who have been known to discriminate against people with protected characteristics;
- Who promote gambling, debt, or risky financial behaviour;
- Who have received sponsorship from companies engaged in discriminatory or poor ethical practices;
- Where the money has been gained illegally;
- Whose behaviour is contrary to the objectives or values of our charity;
- Where to accept the donation would be counter-productive for the organisation overall.

Any organisation placed on the approved list of partners will remain on this list; however, the VSE office team will review the relationship before signing any new contract.

(Check list available in Annex 1 of this paper)

2. Benefits and recognition

Funding entities and sponsors can be recognised for their contribution to VSE's work through:

- Use of their logo and/or their branding on VSE's products /merchandise
- VSE events

- VSE publications
- Website and other social media activities
- Other publicly shared materials

The use of a logo/brand and the specific language used as recognition for funding/donations will be mutually agreed by both parties.

Benefits to the funding entity from their involvement with Victim Support Europe may include:

- Brand Distribution
- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Public Relations
- Internal Advantages

Entities who fund an event shall be recognised only in connection with the event sponsored; however, this recognition may include advance publicity, printed programmes, web or e-bulletin announcements, event signage, oral thanks, etc. Events underwritten by more than one funding entity may assign recognition levels, dependant on the amount of sponsorship offered: funding entities would be linked directly to a portion of the event, e.g., underwriting the reception, or by identifying levels e.g. platinum, gold, silver, and bronze.

VSE administrators may establish common names and ranges for funding levels with generic benefits applicable to each level of funding.

Funding entities, wishing to promote their support of VSE, may use their name, logo, and URL in accordance with the contract terms and with the advance approval by VSE on specific content and wording. In the absence of a signed contract, sponsors are not permitted to use VSE's name or logo in any public-facing material. The unauthorized use of VSE's name or logo nullifies (invalidates) any existing funding agreement.

Approval of funders/sponsors

The VSE Executive Board are ultimately accountable for the funding /sponsorship policy and for approving individual funding agreements.

Any new funding entity or sponsor recommended by the VSE head office will be subject to approval by the Executive Board.

VSE head office staff have the duty to ensure entities demonstrate compliance each time a new agreement is negotiated; they must alert the Executive Board whenever compliance issues arise and seek their approval for further engagement with the said entity.

VSE head office will maintain a list of approved funding entities and sponsors. To facilitate the decision making process and to ensure the smooth running of VSE operations, once a sponsor has passed the decision making process, it will remain on the list of eligible funders for as long as it complies with the aforementioned criteria.

Entities, which proactively reach out to VSE with a proposal for funding/sponsorship, will be informed in writing of the Executive Board's decision to add them (or not) to the list of approved sponsors.

When the Board does not approve an entity or removes a pre-approved entity from the said list a reasoned decision will be prepared in writing. The entity concerned will be given the opportunity to provide additional arguments to appeal the Board's decision. The Board will have one month, from the date the initial decision was communicated, to deliberate on their decision. The results of these deliberations will be communicated in writing to the entity concerned.

3. Confidentiality

To reduce liability, and to maintain potential future relationships, decisions to reject funds or sponsorship offered by a specific entity shall be kept confidential. Details will normally only be known to VSE administrators, the Management Team and Executive Board members – depending on their involvement.

4. Memorandum of Understanding

VSE and its partners will ensure that a written Memorandum of Understanding is in place to identify the specific roles and responsibilities of the partnership. All agreements will be confirmed in writing and will be in line with this ethical partnership policy.

Funding and sponsorship arrangements should not hinder or influence the way VSE operates. VSE administrators should be able to carry out VSE activities impartially, regardless of the funding agreement or the interests or businesses of the sponsors. This principle should be made clear in funding and sponsorship agreements so that it is fully understood by all parties.

1. A funding/sponsorship arrangement should not impose or imply conditions that would limit, or appear to limit, VSE administrators from fully and impartially carrying out their activities.
2. There should be no real or perceived conflict between the objectives, mission, vision and values of VSE and those of the sponsors.
3. Funding/sponsorship of VSE activities should not involve the explicit endorsement of the funding entity or the funding entities' products or services.
4. Where funding/sponsorship takes the form of goods rather than money, the products offered should be evaluated for their fitness for purpose and relevance to the needs of VSE.
5. Neither employees, volunteers, interns nor VSE Executive Board members should receive personal benefits from a sponsor.
6. Funding or sponsorship may be sought by calling for expressions of interest, responding to calls for proposals, or by other means, including direct negotiations with funding entities.
7. VSE should assess proposals from potential sponsors/founders against pre-determined criteria, such as:

- **Benefits sought:** what does VSE expect from an agreement?
 - **Acknowledgement expectations:** what level of recognition does the sponsor/recipient look to obtain, including mediums, frequency, and type?
 - **Reputation:** are there risks associated with partnering with an organisation, including any actual or perceived conflicts of interest?
 - **Public perception:** will the arrangement be to the benefit, or the detriment, of the public's perception of VSE's head office and its members?
 - **Relevance:** does the agreement align with VSE's corporate vision, priorities, objectives, and values?
8. A funding arrangement is a contract and should be described as a written agreement.
 9. All funding or sponsorship arrangements should be approved by the Executive Board or Management Team in coordination with VSE's head office, depending on the decision process as described in this policy.

5. Termination of agreement

Each sponsorship or funding contract or agreement should include review dates and expected end dates. In certain circumstance, the partnership may be terminated earlier than anticipated such as:

- The partner/sponsor comes under criminal investigation.
- VSE's integrity is threatened as a result of the sponsorship
- An actual or potential conflict of interest arises and alternative strategies to manage it cannot be established/reached
- The partner/sponsor is subject to insolvency (including voluntary administration, liquidation or bankruptcy)
- VSE takes a decision to dissolve or significantly review its mission or values.

6. Transparency and publicity

For reasons of transparency, VSE shall normally, publicly acknowledge all contributions and engagements unless the sponsor specifically requests anonymity.

The sponsor/funder can ask to remain anonymous as long as their identity is known to VSE; this request is subject to due diligence and risk assessment.

VSE will disclose relationships with donors in the following ways:

- The names of all sponsors/funders, and the amount of their contributions, will be listed in reports to the VSE General Assembly.
- All mention of sponsors/funders in articles, reports, VSE events and other outputs will, at minimum, state that the associated activity is conducted with the financial support of the sponsor/funder.

The relationship between VSE and their sponsors/funders shall be made public, upon acceptance of the funding, through any means agreed by VSE and the sponsor/funder.

- VSE may agree that a sponsor/funder may publicly states its support for VSE;
- VSE shall publish accurate reports on its income and expenditures (including expenses incurred in soliciting contributions, gifts, and grants), that meet the standards set forth in applicable law and regulations and provide clear, complete, and accurate information on its activities for stakeholders, beneficiaries, funders, and the public.
- VSE shall not disclose any confidential information about the sponsor/funder, including any conditions attached to agreements, to any unauthorised parties, unless VSE and the sponsor have previously agreed that such disclosure is permissible.

ANNEX 1: Checklist for Ethical Partnership with Sponsors or Funders

The following checklist is compiled to help determine potential sponsors/funders and to highlight issues to be considered, along with any appropriate action to be taken to manage and mitigate the potential issues/risks identified.

The checklist evaluates potential and possible risks for each issue identified. This should take into account the inherent sensitivity of the issue itself and the steps that can be taken to manage the issue appropriately.

Name of the sponsor/funder:		
Contact details (address, telephone no., e-mail)		
Contact person:		
Amount of donation:		
Questions	YES/NO	Possible or potential risks
Are there any reputational risks related to VSE's association with the funder/sponsor?		
Is there any potential conflict with VSE's values, mission, vision, and objectives that might be caused by seeking funding or engagement with the funder/sponsor?		
Does the funding/sponsorship support the achievement of VSE's strategic objectives?		
Does the sponsor/funder benefit from slavery or child labour?		
Is the sponsor/funder engaged in discriminatory behaviours and non-ethical practices?		
Is the sponsor/ funder known to not promote equal opportunities or diversity?		
Is the sponsor/funder known to promote hatred?		
Is the sponsor/funder known to discriminate against people with protected characteristics?		
Does the sponsor/funder promote gambling, debt or risky financial behaviour		
Is the sponsor/funder engaged in discriminatory or poor ethical practice with other companies?		
Does the sponsor/funder earn their money illegally?		
Is the sponsor/funder`s behaviour contrary to the objectives and values of VSE		
Is the sponsor/funder under criminal investigation?		
Is the sponsor/funder engaged in activities that support terrorism and related behaviours?		
Is the sponsor/funder known to promote activities that cause environmental damage?		

Does the sponsor/funder contribute to or promote violence?		
Does the sponsor/funder contribute to poor human health or the violation of human rights?		