



# **REPORT OF THE EC-NGO ROUND TABLE MEETING HELD ON 5 OCTOBER 2017**

## **Purpose of the meeting:**

- An opportunity for sharing good practices and foreseeing the challenges ahead in the field of victims' rights;
- Identifying ways for better future collaboration between the EC and NGOs at both European and national levels.

## **Participants:**

Dr. Helgard van Hüllen, Vice President, VSE; Mr Levent Altan, Executive Director, VSE; Ms Jeanette Fava, Office Manager, VSE; Ms Katarzyna Janicka-Pawlowska, Team Leader, DG Justice; Ms Alena Koudelkova, Legal officer, DG Justice; Ms Isabelle Louis, Project Officer, DG Justice; Ms Nadia Levantino, Trainee, DG Justice; Ms Sonila Metushi, Head of Strategy & Public Affairs, AA; Ms Edit Torzs, Executive Director, EFRJ; Ms Emanuela Biffi, Communications and Events Officer, EFRJ; Mr Willem Ary van der Brugge, Secretary General, CEP; Ms Margherita Leone, EC Coordinator, CHI; Ms Federica Toscano, Project Officer, MCE; Mr Paul Bertrand and Ms Sabrina Terentjew, in charge of the mission "Public Affairs Territories", FENVAC; Ms Liuska Sanna, Director, End FGM European Network.

**Report drawn up by: Jeanette Fava**

**Time:** Meeting commenced at 14.00hrs and ended at 17.00hrs

## **Abbreviations used:**

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VSE - Victim Support Europe; AA – Amber Alert; EFRJ – EU Forum for Restorative Justice; CEP – Confederation of European Probation; CHI – Child Helpline International; MCE – Missing Children Europe; FENVAC – Federation Nationale des Victimes d’Attentats et d’Accidents Collectifs; FGM – Female Genital Mutilation; DG – Directorate General; EU – European Union; EC – European Commission.

## **Agenda Item 1: Introduction**

Ms Katarzyna from the EC welcomed the participants and stated that for the third consecutive time, the EC would be providing all NGOs’ representatives the opportunity to speak about their challenges and the most critical concurrent problems related to victims at all levels they are encountering in order to be able to construct better EU policy-making in relation to the Victims’ Rights Directive.

Dr. Helgard van Hüllen, Vice President, VSE welcomed the representatives and stated that like in the previous two years from when the Round Table Meetings have started, much work for the benefit of the victims has been done in good cooperation with all the NGOs that have attended for the meetings. Dr. Van Hüllen stated that we will continue to build on what has been done and seek better ways of cooperation. She stated that VSE’s last year was very demanding in view of the terrorist attacks for which new and specific services were requested by the victims.

## **Agenda Item 2: Sharing of knowledge**

The NGOs’ representatives were invited to speak about their current work related to victims’ issues and their priorities and plans for the coming months in particular those related to the urgent needs of specific groups.

Ms Metushi from AA provided an overview of the present objectives of the organisation and highlighted that like most other European NGOs, the biggest challenge of AA at present is its significant financial and human resources requirement in order to keep it on-going and functional. She spoke about their progressive work to constantly improve the child alert mechanism and the Schengen information system.

Ms Torzs from EFRJ stated that amongst other activities they provide yearly summer schools and seek that the Victims’ Rights Directive is being adhered to in Member States. They have as well recently published a Practice Guide on the Victims’ Directive. They also plan to set up a network of national policy makers through whom they can find support for constructing restorative practices in Member States.



Mr Van der Brugge from CEP and Ms Leone from CHI also provided a general overview of their organisations and their current activities, demands and events. Ms Leone added that their two of their main priorities are improving their present referral practices and database storage.

Ms Toscano from MCE stated that they are foreseeing to do a research about why children go missing in order to plan concretely where to invest their funding and what needs urgent priority. They are also working on a three-year programme based on empowering children to take sensual decisions at the right time and place. This programme concerns as well the issue of child trafficking, the build-up of better communication practices and coordination with EU policies.

Mr Bertrand from FENVAC highlighted their services which include individual support to the victims and their positive cooperation with civil society and government bodies. Ms Sanna from End FGM European Network stated that they are focusing on to provide a quality service to different professionals through their online training platform which is available in nine languages.

### **Agenda item 3: Enhancing cooperation**

Ms Katarzyna spoke about the EC's plans for next year (2018) related to victims' rights. She stated that DG Justice is working with several national experts in Member States in order to safeguard the implementation of policies and merge networks related to victims' rights at a national level. She encouraged the participates to work closely with their national ombudsman since they are quite aware of the basic and specific needs of their victims and therefore are in the best position to delegate their knowledge and expertise at a national level to the ombudsman.

She reminded the participants that the call for proposals to be eligible for funding will close by end of business 10 October 2017. At this stage some of the participants asked about the type of actions that will be most eligible for funding and remarked that the present procedure entails a considerable investment in administrative work and there is a substantial imbalance with what one gets as funding and the money and time invested for proposal writing.

Most of the NGOs addressed their concerns regarding the calls for funding. They stated that small organisations do not have the required resources to do both the demanding administrative work to activate the proposal as well as to do the follow-up afterwards as requested by the EC.



Mr Altan then proceeded with activities that VSE has undergone during the last year including the development of virtual helplines through which distant support can be provided and cross border cooperation can be enhanced, the improvement of the referral service system, the winter and summer schools as well as the benefits VSE provided to particular victims from projects such as VOCIARE and VICTORIA. Mr Altan provided as well a brief overview of the coming conference to be held on 8 December in Brussels which will deal about cybercrime.

#### **Agenda Item 4: Adjournment and conclusions on action plans**

Mr Altan suggested that all present representatives should contribute in the write-up of a joint paper to the EC showing their concerns and providing suggestions in this regard.

The NGOs' representatives suggested to continue sharing their practices and knowledge in order to avoid duplication or competition for funds for the same services.