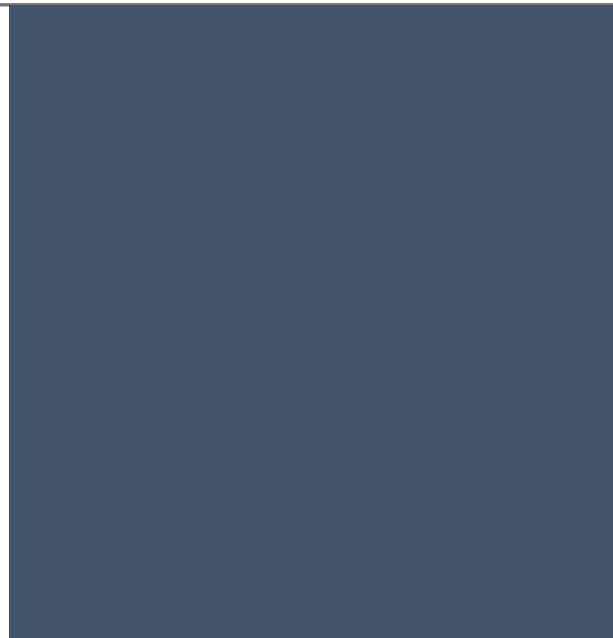




VSE STRATEGY 2026 - 2030

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1 President's message

2 Introduction

VSE in the Next 5 Years: From Rights to Reality

What began as a coalition of 17 national organisations determined to give a voice to forgotten victims has grown into Victim Support Europe (VSE); a powerful network of over 80 members across 35 countries, united by one mission: to ensure that every victim of crime is heard, supported, and empowered. Over the decades, VSE has championed victims' rights, built resilient organisations, and fostered a culture of collaboration and knowledge-sharing across borders. Together, VSE and its members have helped millions reclaim their lives.

Now, as we look to the future, VSE's 2026–2030 Strategy marks a bold new chapter. It is more than advocacy; it is about turning vision into action. Through cutting-edge research, smart policy development, and hands-on capacity building, we will focus our efforts on helping organisations and governments alike to assess systems, services and rights and transform them into effective victim centred solutions.

In a world shaped by rapid change and global crises, we recognise the urgency, the necessity and the opportunity, to lead in this mission. Built on and supported by our members – global experts in the field – as well as our international network of partners, VSE is poised to deliver real change where it is needed most.

Too often, support for victims is fragmented, short term and poorly funded - with efforts targeting specific groups while others are left behind. This highlights a pressing need for stronger coordination. We are not just imagining a better future for victims. We are building it, with a coherent, inclusive response that ensures no victim is left without protection, support, and access to justice.

Victim Support Europe (VSE) is entering a new era, not just as a network, but as a driving force for systemic change across Europe. Over the next 5 years, our aim is to transform the way victims of crime are recognised and supported, ensuring that their rights are not only merely acknowledged in legislation, but realised through action. **We will shape a future where no victim is left behind, and this is what that future looks like:**

- **A driver of real change:** transforming legal commitments into tangible protections by helping EU Member States, European States and other countries close the gap between law and reality, and turning policy into action through cutting-edge research, analysis, and hands-on implementation support.
- **A centre of excellence, operational capacity building and innovation:** leading the way in trauma-informed care, digital inclusion, and equitable access. From grassroots to government, we are building the operational capacity needed by our members and by anyone who requests it, to support *all* victims — especially those too often left in the shadows.
- **A voice for every victim:** embedding lived experiences into every layer of reform, no matter a person's gender, age, identity, or ability. Because justice must be inclusive — or it is not justice at all.

- **A builder of bridges:** connecting civil society, academia, governments, EU institutions, and communities within and across borders to forge united, coordinated responses rooted in empathy and shared responsibility.
- **A trusted partner in crisis:** ready to act swiftly and compassionately in the face of conflict, disaster, or emergency, always putting victims at the centre of response and recovery.

In the next 5 years, with and through our Members and Partners, VSE will not only lead this transformation; we will inspire it. Because we believe that change is possible, when we build it together. In 2025, VSE celebrated 35 years of standing strong for victims. 2026 is just the start of a new future together.

3 Shaping the Future of VSE: A Five-Year Roadmap

1. A European Voice for All Victims: VSE's Growth and Impact

35 years ago, victims of crime were treated with indifference, inside and outside of the justice system. Despite around 15% of people falling victim to serious crime every year and that crime having an enormous impact on people's lives, individually and as a community, victims' needs were being ignored.

Victim Support Europe (VSE) was founded to address those. Over the years, we have worked to establish laws, rights and services. Starting as a voluntary organisation in the 1990s, our first office with full time staff was opened in Brussels in 2014. We have continued to grow since then.

With the adoption of our 2021 – 2024 Strategy, we have increased all our activities. On the advocacy side we have continuously engaged with international, European and national actors. We have formally responded to 29 public consultations across the EU and Council of Europe—driving reforms on dossiers such as the Victims' Rights Directive, the Directive on violence against women and domestic violence, anti-trafficking and child sexual abuse material—while also advising EU institutions and platforms throughout the period.

In the same years, we delivered at least 17 training sessions, 14 webinars and 9 workshops, convened 10 Council of Europe working-level meetings and 7 national meetings, and spoke widely—including 20+ external events in 2024 alone—to build capacity and mainstream victims' rights across sectors. We also engaged the public at scale, reaching over 1.6 million people through major campaigns (2024: 800k+), and strengthened knowledge sharing with multiple newsletters to 1,000+ subscribers alongside 17 videos and 129 visuals.

Over this period, not only did our members play a critical role in our activities, they collectively supported more than 11 million victims, helping ensure access to services and safe justice across Europe. At the national level, we backed implementation through tailored capacity-building, policy advice and coordination with members, complementing our EU-level advocacy and UN and CoE engagement;

Over the years our network has grown from those 17 original founding members to 81 organisations across 35 countries in 2025.



Today, VSE is the leading European umbrella organisation that advocates on behalf of all victims of crime, no matter what the crime, no matter who the victim.

2. Building on Our Progress

Our previous strategy set out ambitious objectives that would help build a clear vision and pathway for victims rights and services. At the heart of our work has been an evidenced based approach drawing on the expertise and knowledge of our members and networks from around the world. Through dedicated Working Groups, surveys, in person and online research, webinars, workshops and more, we have brought together diverse voices and expertise, sparking collaboration across key victim-related issues. Year on year, we have run or taken part in dozens of projects to build an strong foundation for our policies and to support future change across Europe and globally.

Knowledge founded on diversity, inclusion and the adaptation of broad principles to national and local settings has been a linchpin of our success. We have most recently created a Victims Platform as a powerful space for open dialogue and meaningful exchange with victims – bringing them into the heart of our work, while our Youth Platform has given rise to a new generation of advocates, invigorating our movement with fresh ideas and passion. We continue to innovate and explore. We are now in the process of establishing communities of practice to enable frontline practitioners to come together across borders –to learn from each other on every practical detail of supporting victims.

In line with our ethos of support is everyone’s job, we continue to expand not only our membership but also the experts and partner we rely on – from the private sector, to law enforcement and justice actors,

to the health sector, labour inspectorates, and much more. We know that the crime affects every aspects of a victims life and we are building a community that wants and knows how to address those harms.

The last five years have been focused on building the foundations for change. Today's challenge and opportunity - in a time defined by rapid change and growing complexity, is to translate this knowledge into practice. To shift laws, policies and theories into the realm of reality for victims. Our VSE Strategy for 2026-2030 rises to meet this challenge.

This new strategy is our commitment to evolve, adapt, and stay ahead of the curve. We are embracing change, listening to emerging needs, and integrating continuous learning to stay aligned with the shifting realities victims face today. Because in a world that never stands still, neither can we. We move forward: smarter, stronger, and more prepared than ever to create lasting and sustainable impact.

3. Guiding Victim Support Through a Fast-Changing World

This new five-year plan is a product of active engagement, with the participation of our members' and the lived experiences of victim advocates, showcasing VSE's ambitions, inclusion, service and impact. It aims to guide VSE's work across policy, victim-care, capacity building, communications and projects, to ensure all victims in Europe receive effective support, protection, and justice.

It has been shaped by them and together with victims they are at the centre of the strategy. This means that in the next five years we will significantly increase our work with and support for our members. Through them and with them we will transform the victims landscape.

The strategy serves as both a roadmap for our daily actions and a foundation for our long-term goals. This strategy embodies our collective ambition and functions as a guidance document to assist us in living up to our common goals. Our core aim is to convert policy and law into practical reforms that strengthen the rights and support for victims of crime.

VSE's own policies lays the foundation for these changes. They provide the conceptual framework for systemic, long term solutions. In particular, the National Victim Support Framework, Safe Justice, Effective Communications Frameworks, Data protection and compensation policies. These provide the core principles and structure for how we deliver reform and ensure responses remain coordinated, trauma-informed, and rooted in empathy.

At the same time, VSE recognises that innovation is reshaping the way victims are supported. By integrating research, foresight, and ethical technology — including the responsible use of artificial intelligence — into our work, we aim to strengthen prevention, anticipate emerging risks, and design adaptive systems that serve people first. Our ambition is to pair empathy with innovation so that progress never comes at the expense of safety or dignity.

This strategy was created collectively with all our members and in consultation with our stakeholders to ensure that our work remains visionary, targeted and relevant. The need for all of us to be ever more strategic and thoughtful in how we function as collective movement, our valuable partnerships, and how we use our energy and resources feels greater than ever in order to re-shape our commitment to all victims.

4. The Evolving Risks Shaping Victims' Realities

Europe stands at a crossroads facing both complex challenges and unprecedented opportunities. As the EU works to deliver on its strategic priorities, it must confront a fast-evolving criminal landscape shaped by global instability, rapid digitalisation, and emerging technologies. Crime is no longer confined to traditional boundaries: it is adapting, innovating, and expanding in both the digital and physical worlds.

From cybercrime and online exploitation to cross-border trafficking and tech-enabled fraud, criminal networks are growing more sophisticated and agile, leveraging technology to operate at greater scale and speed.

Victims of crime across Europe are navigating an increasingly complex environment shaped by evolving global, political, and digital threats. These systemic risks not only increase the likelihood and severity of victimisation but also expose the persistent weaknesses in how victims are recognised, supported, and protected within EU Member States.

These shifting tactics and threats demand an equally agile and forward-thinking response from victim support systems, law enforcement, and policymakers alike. Understanding and anticipating these shifts will enable VSE and its partners to strengthen prevention strategies, guide research on digital and AI-related exposure, and reinforce resilience before harm occurs.

These trends indicate that technological and social change cannot be viewed in isolation. Artificial intelligence, digitalisation, polarisation, and organised crime interact across sectors and borders. For victims, this means risks are multiplying while systems remain fragmented. Tackling such complexity demands foresight, research, and preventive capacity across justice, health, education, and security domains. AI must therefore be treated as a horizontal factor — one that poses risks when misused but also provides powerful tools for protection, detection, and accessibility when guided by ethics and human rights.

To stay ahead, we must invest in innovation, strengthen cooperation, and build robust, adaptable frameworks that reflect the realities of today, and anticipate the challenges of tomorrow. A whole-of-society approach is essential to ensure prevention, protection, and recovery are integrated rather than isolated.

Fast-growing threats and risks for victims include:

- **Foreign Interference, Disinformation, Democratic Backsliding, Hate crime and Extremism:** Foreign entities exploit digital platforms to manipulate EU elections and public opinion, increasing social polarisation and fuelling hate crimes that threaten societal cohesion and victim safety.

These coordinated efforts often exploit social media and digital platforms to spread false narratives, incite hostility, and normalise intolerance. As a result, vulnerable groups—including migrants, ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTQIA+ communities, and people with disabilities—face heightened insecurity, stigma, and targeted violence. Yet, as these trends persist anyone who speaks out or stands up becomes a target. We must develop both a strong foundation to protect and support all these victims but also specialised responses for the individual needs of different groups.

Beyond the direct harm to individuals, these dynamics erode public trust, weaken democratic institutions, and undermine social cohesion. Addressing these challenges requires not only countering harmful narratives but also strengthening inclusive policies, education, and digital literacy to build societal resilience.

- **Digital Threats and Tech-Driven Crime:** The criminal landscape is evolving at unprecedented speed with the spread of digital technologies and artificial intelligence. Cyber-attacks — including ransomware targeting critical infrastructure, governments, businesses, and individuals, often state-aligned — expose victims to financial loss, privacy breaches, and disruption of essential services. AI-driven online fraud, identity theft, and the production and distribution of child sexual-abuse material pose severe risks to individuals, particularly minors, through data misuse and manipulation. These developments present serious challenges for law-enforcement and justice systems, which often struggle to keep pace with technological innovation.
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI): Risk, Opportunity, and Responsibility:** The rise of artificial intelligence is transforming both the nature of crime and the way we support victims. AI technologies are increasingly used to generate and distribute abuse material, manipulate information, automate scams, and amplify online hate — intensifying existing vulnerabilities and creating new forms of harm.

At the same time, AI presents powerful opportunities to improve victim protection, enhance case management, and strengthen early detection of risk. VSE recognises AI as both a **cross-cutting risk and a tool for innovation**, and will therefore promote ethical, rights-based AI applications across the victim support ecosystem. By working with researchers, policymakers, and service providers, VSE will ensure that technology serves people, not perpetrators, and that digital progress goes hand in hand with safety, dignity, and justice.

- **Gender-Based Violence (GBV):** GBV remains a pervasive and under-addressed threat, affecting individuals across all genders. Victims often face systemic barriers to recognition, protection, and justice, particularly when legal frameworks or services fail to reflect the diversity of survivors' experiences. A more inclusive and intersectional response based on race, ethnicity, disability, age, and sexual orientation, is urgently needed to address this persistent form of violence.
- **Child Victimisation:** Children continue to face high levels of exploitation, both online and offline — including trafficking, forced labour, and sexual abuse. Despite EU efforts, significant gaps remain in early identification, protection systems, cross-border cooperation, and the prosecution of offenders.
- **Organised Crime Adaptation:** Criminal networks are adapting quickly, integrating online and offline methods to expand their reach and evade detection across borders. Organised crime groups are becoming increasingly sophisticated, making extensive use of digital technologies, encrypted communication platforms, and online marketplaces to expand their operations. This evolution enables them to operate across borders with greater anonymity and speed, complicating efforts to disrupt their activities.
- **Funding Constraints and Marginalisation of Victim Support Services and Civil Society:** Victim support services and the civil organisations that deliver them are too often sidelined in political and financial decision-making processes. Funding remains unstable, short-term, and overly project-based, leaving services vulnerable to disruption and hinders long-term planning. NGOs - essential partners in delivering rights and services - are frequently excluded from sustainable investment and

expected to contribute expertise without fair recognition, adequate compensation or meaningful involvement in policy development. Addressing these systemic issues requires a commitment to stable, multi-year funding frameworks and greater inclusion of civil society voices in strategic decisions to ensure continuous, high-quality support for victims.

- **Resource Allocation Challenges:** The need to balance investments in defence, economic growth, and democratic initiatives is critical to effectively counter these multifaceted threats and protect victims from harm.

These forces:

- Fuel hate speech, polarisation, and violence, particularly against migrants, minority communities, and other marginalised groups;
- Exploit children through online sexual abuse material and trafficking;
- Enable gender-based violence (GBV) in digital and real-world spaces, often without consequences for perpetrators;
- Undermine institutions meant to safeguard rights, weakening victims' trust in justice systems and state protection.
- A violent community that enables the exploitation and trafficking of vulnerable individuals—including children and migrants—and creates significant risks for victims and frontline responders.
- The blurred lines between online and offline criminal activity also pose new challenges for law enforcement, victim support services, and policy-makers alike.
- Reduced funding and changing priorities inhibit full implementation of victims rights and services whilst failing to prioritise issues which have significant individual and societal impacts

And on top of all that the belief that "enough has been done" that ignores the harsh reality faced by millions of victims. Despite EU-level frameworks such as the Victims' Rights Directive, victims continue to face deep and persistent obstacles in accessing their rights. Findings from the BeneVict project, alongside other studies, indicate that:

- Victims often lack information about their rights and available support services, especially at early stages.
- Procedural rights are inconsistently applied, with many victims excluded from criminal proceedings or unable to meaningfully participate.
- Support services are unevenly available, underfunded, or overly fragmented — particularly for victims in rural areas or from vulnerable groups.
- Mistrust in authorities, fear of retaliation, and cultural or linguistic barriers further silence victims, especially among migrant, LGBTQ+, persons with disabilities, or minority communities.

The Gap Between Law and Implementation

A core challenge is the systemic failure to prioritise victims' rights as a policy and operational imperative. While the legal framework exists -most notably the Victims' Rights Directive (currently under revision)- it is often undermined by a lack of political will, fragmented transposition and coordination, limited training, and insufficient resources.

Key problems include:

- Lack of monitoring and accountability for rights violations;
- Insufficient cross-sectoral cooperation (e.g. between justice, health, and social services);
- Emphasis on offender-focused justice to the exclusion of victims' needs for safety, dignity, and participation;
- Non-uniform transposition and enforcement of EU directives across Member States.

As a result, victims' rights too often remain theoretical rather than effectively upheld in practice. Many victims continue to face obstacles in accessing information, justice, and support services due to limited political prioritisation, insufficient funding resources, and a lack of coordination both at national and local levels.

Without meaningful implementation, even the most progressive legal frameworks cannot deliver real change. Strengthening accountability mechanisms, investing in national infrastructure, and ensuring systematic training for professionals are essential to closing the gap between rights on paper and rights in practice. This failure to embed victims' rights in a systematic, integrated, and victim-centred way allows protection gaps to persist and re-traumatisation to occur — even where laws are in place.

To tackle the complex, interconnected challenges reshaping our world, we need a holistic approach that reinforces early intervention, ensures victims receive tailored protection and support, and promotes meaningful across sectors throughout Europe. Meeting today's challenges demands more than isolated solutions; it requires bold, united action to reinforce protective measures, enhance victim support, and build resilience through strong cooperation across sectors and borders.

Prioritising victims is not only a matter of justice, it is a cornerstone of Europe's resilience, prosperity and democracy. By placing victims at the heart of EU's agenda- and in broader European Level- we advance the Sustainable Development Goals on peace, justice, health and wellbeing. Supporting victims breaks cycles of crime, reduces long-term social and economic costs, and restores trust in our institutions. It strengthens social cohesion against polarisation and extremism, protects mental health, and empowers young people through safe education and resilience skills.

Victim-centred policies deliver clear cost-benefit gains for society and business alike, while ensuring dignity and security for millions of citizens. This is why a victim-centred approach must be mainstreamed across all EU priorities—from economic prosperity to health, education and democracy—with strong support for civil society organisations that deliver these essential services on the ground.

Progress has been made in specific issues and groups of victims. Yet overall, support remains fragmented without a strong foundation that protects all victims. This piecemeal approach is less efficient and leaves many unprotected. At the same time, resilience in individuals and communities is weakening, making societies more vulnerable to harm, polarisation, and extremism. To address this, we need to break down

silos, bridge sectors, and align efforts across justice, health, education, technology, and civil society. It means building systems that not only respond to harm but actively reduce risks and build resilience before harm occurs. Investing in such foundations is more efficient, more sustainable, and delivers benefits far beyond victim policy.

By working together and supporting social cohesion we can create a future where every individual is safer, better supported, and more empowered. While there has been important progress on specific issues and groups — such as child victims, victims of gender-based violence, and hate crime — the EU has not yet built a strong, systemic foundation that ensures equal protection and support for all victims. This fragmented approach is less efficient, creates protection gaps, and leaves many victims behind.

Victims continue to suffer harm from the very systems meant to protect and support them. Experiences of being blamed, disbelieved, retraumatised during testimony, or portrayed insensitively in the media not only discourage reporting but also erode trust and faith in justice systems, and public institutions more broadly. This secondary victimisation can have long-term psychological, social, and legal consequences, often compounding the original trauma.

VSE Members have repeatedly underlined the urgent need for trauma-informed practices and respectful treatment at every stage of proceedings; from initial contact with authorities to court appearances and post-trial support. This includes ensuring accessible information, emotional and legal assistance, protection from intimidation, timely and equitable compensation for victims and accountability for professionals who mishandle cases. Building victim-centred systems is not only a matter of justice but a prerequisite for restoring public confidence and fostering meaningful participation in legal processes.

These challenges justify the urgent need to refocus political attention, policy design, and operational resources on victims of crime. The inability to implement victims' rights consistently and meaningfully across the EU is not just a legal failure — it is a democratic and societal one. To close this gap, we must prioritise systemic change, ensuring that:

- Victims are informed, empowered, and supported throughout their journey;
- Services are available, accessible, and coordinated;
- Legal frameworks are translated into real, enforceable protections;
- Civil society has the space and resources to hold systems accountable and deliver specialised support.

5. Targeted Action, Comprehensive Care for All Victims

At the heart of our mission is a simple, powerful commitment: to stand with all victims of crime, no matter who they are or what they have endured.

From the beginning, our work has been guided by the knowledge that every victim deserves support, as right owners, that is accessible, effective, and genuinely responsive to their needs. However, responses have frequently focused narrowly on specific crimes or groups, such as terrorism in the aftermath of devastating attacks, without building a strong and universal foundation that protects all. This fragmented approach leaves many victims without meaningful help and weakens resilience across society. Immediate action is essential: unaddressed victimisation fuels cycles of harm, undermines trust in institutions and justice, and erodes social cohesion.

That is why we have expanded our focus- combining comprehensive frameworks that guarantee support for every victim with specialised expertise in key fields such as terrorism, cybercrime, gender-based violence, and domestic violence.

True, inclusive support requires targeted projects, evidence-based research, and collaborative learning, we will continue to strengthen our capacity to deliver informed guidance, impactful advocacy, and both universal and tailored support, ensuring safer, more resilient, and more democratic societies.

Our growing network of members has been vital to this journey. Many bring unique, field-specific expertise that continues to enrich our collective ability to respond — not just broadly, but precisely — to the needs of victims across Europe.

Looking ahead, as crime trends shift and new challenges emerge, we are focused on setting clear priorities and ambitious goals, not only to advance support for victims of specific crimes, but also to improve rights, services, and access to justice for all.

Because every victim matters, and we are here, ready to listen, ready to act, and ready to lead.

6. Building a Balanced and Impactful Strategy

Our strategy is designed to advance progress for all victims, while continuing to develop and maintain specialised responses for those with distinct needs. To do this effectively, we take a layered approach:

i. Strong Foundation for All

We focus on building a core framework of rights, services, and protections that benefits all victims, regardless of the crime or context. This is not only the most efficient use of resources, but also reflects the reality that many victims require similar types of support — such as access to justice, quality information, psychological care, and respectful treatment. However, these solutions must be delivered with enough flexibility to adapt to individual circumstances and needs.

ii. Specialised Responses for Specific Victim Groups

Some victim groups — such as victims of trafficking, terrorism, gender-based violence, or hate crime — face unique vulnerabilities, higher risks, or more complex recovery needs. These often relate to the most serious forms of harm, requiring specialised legal, psychological, and social responses that go beyond the general framework. Our strategy continues to prioritise such specialisation, where it is most needed and where general responses fall short.

iii. How We Set Priorities in choosing our priorities

We assess:

- Where VSE can have the greatest impact;
- Where there are clear gaps in current policy or service provision;
- Where the scale or urgency of the problem demands attention;
- How an action can produce systemic, long-term benefit across the victim support ecosystem.

This balanced approach allows us to pursue broad, inclusive progress while ensuring that no group is left behind.

7. Core Elements of VSE Policy Framework

This strategy builds on an integrated framework linking our vision and practice. Its core elements include National Victim Support Frameworks, Safe Justice, Victim-Centric Approaches, Sustainable Funding, Mainstreaming Victims' Rights across sectors, 116 006 Helplines, Effective Communication with Victims, and strong Data Protection standards ensuring both privacy and accessibility.

i. National Victim Support Frameworks

Strengthening and formalising national victim support frameworks is essential to delivering coordinated, sustainable, and high-quality services, while embedding EU standards across all Member States.

VSE's members are at the heart of designing and delivering these solutions together with States. With decades of experiences and millions of victims supported, they have the expert knowledge of what works and does not work. They comprise civil society actors and state entities who together truly understand that a multi-agency, multi-sectoral coordinated approach is the key to success.

This involves establishing the strategic and structural frameworks for long term success - clear roles, responsibilities, multi-sectoral consultation bodies, implementation and oversight mechanisms and permanent funding structures.

Those frameworks support multi-modal delivery of support through all crime and specialist services, the establishment of 116006 victims helplines in the EU and further afield, online and other distance support solutions. Support in criminal proceedings including accompaniment, court support, and specialised solutions such as facility dogs. These services must operate to EU-wide standards to harmonise service provision, reduce disparities, and ensure that all victims – regardless of location – have access to effective, timely support that meets their diverse needs.

Support is everyone's job. This means implementing strategies that enable everyone to help victims. Starting with building resilience in victims and empowering their social network of family, friends and colleagues to help. It also means mainstreaming these concepts into the work place, schools, medical and social settings and more.

ii. Access to Safe Justice

A shift must be made in our understanding of our justice systems functions. A victim centric approach – one that empowers victims, minimises harm, gives them choice and voice whilst also protecting their wellbeing – must be incorporated into the very fabric of justice in the same way that fair trial principle have been. This means promoting safe reporting, protection, and respectful treatment throughout all justice processes, minimising harm and eliminating secondary victimisation. This includes trauma-informed practices, safeguarding privacy, and providing adequate support throughout investigations and court proceedings.

iii. Victim-Centric Approach

Embedding victims' needs, rights, and lived experiences at the heart of all policies and services, ensuring recognition, empowerment, dignity, and meaningful participation in decision-making.

iv. Sustainable Funding

VSE will push for diversified, stable and predictable funding and long term investment in victim support systems that match the scale of victims' needs and which move victims' rights beyond short-term projects to long term societal solutions and continuity of care. We will call for sustained EU and national investment, ensuring victim-centred approaches are embedded not only in justice but across health, education, security, and democracy. We will strengthen our activities to highlight both the cost-benefit and societal gains of investing in victims, while also working with our members to secure access to EU and other funds.

v. Mainstreaming Victims' Rights

Ensuring victims' rights are embedded across all policy areas – justice, health, education, security, and democracy – making victim-centred responses a cornerstone of resilient and inclusive societies.

vi. Effective communication with victims

Information for victims and communication with them is fundamental to victims recovery but also to the exercise of their rights. It is well recognised yet is consistently poorly implemented. Underlying this is the failure to implement communication solutions in a coherent coordinated fashion. Different organisations, different circumstances, different victims – all with their own information plans. These must be brought together through communication strategies that bring all relevant actors together to help ensure communications are easy, timely, repeated, accessible a victim-centric, trauma-informed, and respectful.

vii. Victim support and Data Protection

EU Data protection rules have resulted in significant improvements to citizens' privacy. Yet they were largely designed with the private sector in mind. The application of these rules by front line victim services has given rise to wide ranging challenges which in some cases has worsened rather than improved the situation of victims. This has been compounded by variable interpretations of the rules around the EU. At the same time, it is becoming increasingly difficult for law enforcement to prevent crime and pursue criminals with ever more sophisticated methods being used to hide criminal activities.

Conversely, we see that victims' right to privacy in criminal proceedings often takes second position to other priorities such as fair trial rights or political and policy priorities. This results in victims' information being made available to various individuals or agencies where arguably it should not be, and certainly where doing so has or may harm the victim. In other words a victims right to privacy is treated as less important than other priorities.

In the coming years we will work to address these challenges which impede the implementation of rights and services to victims and can cause further harm to victims rather than reducing it. We must, of course, continue to protect the fundamental right to privacy but must at the same time ensure privacy is appropriately balanced with other fundamental rights – such as the right to life.

viii. Build networks and co-ordinating services

VSE's added value lies in its ability to connect systems — linking civil society, national authorities, and EU institutions to ensure coherent messaging and complementary action. By fostering coordination rather than competition among actors, VSE enhances efficiency and coherence across Europe's victim-support landscape. Over the next five years, we will further expand partnerships with organisations within and beyond the EU to strengthen knowledge exchange, innovation, and solidarity worldwide.

VSE is committed to strengthening our membership network and boosting cross-border cooperation, especially in Member States where victim services need urgent development. Beyond Europe's borders, we will expand our international partnerships to spread EU values and best practices worldwide, ensuring victims everywhere receive the support they deserve.

We will continue to expand our membership base and partnerships with organisations across Europe and beyond, building a stronger, interconnected ecosystem that shares knowledge, supports innovation, and amplifies victims' voices globally.

Together, we are building resilient support systems, influencing legislative reform, and creating a future where every victim's voice is heard, respected, and protected.

8. Our Vision, Mission, and Values

We have developed a strong and lasting Vision, Mission, and Values which continue to be relevant in today's evolving landscape

Our **VISION** is for **a Europe in a world where the needs of all victims of crime are fully met through effective rights and high quality services**. To meet this vision, our mission contains three core elements.

Our **MISSION** is to **drive change on victims' issues and support the delivery of victims' services whilst operating sustainably and growing our capability**.

At the heart of Victim Support Europe's actions are its **VALUES: respect, compassion, commitment, community, collaboration**. The way we work, the way we interact with others, the way we seek to achieve change and the way we expect others to work with and on behalf of victims, it is all driven by those values.

We work with **dignity, respect and compassion** for others. We strive to ensure victims are treated, without judgement, but with respect and compassion. We work to ensure that victims' rights, including their human rights, are respected, protected and fulfilled.

Our **commitment to victims** drives our work and our members to deliver more and better rights and services. It reflects our belief that no matter how difficult the issues or our operating environment, we will always strive to achieve a Europe where victims' needs are met.

To achieve results, VSE believes in **working in collaboration** with and through our community of members, stakeholders, policy makers, practitioners and victims.

The approach retains geographical focus on Europe whilst acknowledging the links our work has with the rest of the world. The vision and mission cover the key issues of rights and services which meet victims' needs.

9. Our Working Principles

Our approach is evidence-based, rights-driven, and victim-led. We address victims' needs and the impact of crime in a victim-centred way, ensuring responses are strategic, coordinated, and long term, while remaining flexible and individualised. Our policy development is grounded in qualitative and quantitative evidence, informed by multi-sector and stakeholder consultation and research. All solutions are founded on international best practice but adapted to national contexts to ensure they are effective, sustainable, and relevant.

10. Our Strategic Priorities

Over the last five years, and particularly in 2024 and 2025, a significant number of new EU and international laws and instruments on victims' rights have been adopted. This creates a real opportunity to transform the way victims are supported. However, previous instruments have too often been poorly implemented, leaving rights on paper rather than in practice.

For the next five years, Victim Support Europe's strategic priorities will respond directly to these challenges mentioned above. Our objectives will focus on:

1. Facilitating the **implementation** of EU victims' laws and promoting the **strong victims' rights**
2. **Mainstreaming victims' rights**, enhancing **multi-sectorial** engagement and **coordination**
3. Amplifying **victims' voices and engagement** whilst fostering a culture of **respect** and **solidarity** with victims
4. Maximising **access to high quality support** for all victims
5. Pursuing victims' issues and victim centric solutions in the **wider world**
6. Building **individual resilience frameworks and** strengthening **responses to terrorism and mass victimisation**
7. Strengthening VSE's **organisational capacity and influence**

The following objectives build on VSE's implementation framework, which encompasses key areas such as protection of victims, safe reporting of crime, respectful treatment, effective communication, minimisation of harm, empowerment and participation, compensation and restoration, coordination of services, professional training, and independent oversight. These guiding tasks ensure coherence and measurable impact across all objectives.

Objectives

Table of objectives

OBJECTIVE 1	OBJECTIVE 2	OBJECTIVE 3	OBJECTIVE 4	OBJECTIVE 5	OBJECTIVE 6	OBJECTIVE 7
Facilitate the implementation of victims' laws and promote the strengthening of victims' rights	Mainstream victims' rights, enhancing multi-sectorial engagement and coordination	Amplify victims' voices and engagement whilst fostering a culture of respect and solidarity with victims	Maximise access to high quality support for all victims	Pursue victims issues and victim centric solutions in the wider world	Building individual resilience frameworks and strengthening responses to terrorism and mass victimisation	Strengthening VSE's organisational capacity and influence
1. Advance Structural and Strategic Reform	2.1 Mainstream Victims' Rights Across Sectors and Policies	3.1 Improve Public Communication, Messaging and Narrative Framing, and Social Awareness	4.1 Ensure Accessible, Equitable and Inclusive Services, Continuity of Care and Long-Term Recovery	5.1 Advocate for victims' rights and services across the world	6.1 Strengthen individual resilience to trauma and victimisation	7.1 Ensure strong internal governance through secure IT, data, and information management practices.
2. Enhance Capacity, Skills, and Knowledge Building	2.2 Promote Cross-Sectoral Coordination, Mainstreaming, Facilitating, and Legitimising CSO Involvement in Policy-Making and Service Delivery	3.2 Enable victims to be heard and participate in victims' policies and solutions	4.2 Promote High-Quality Services through Standards & Accreditation	5.2 Build delivery and service capability of organisations and governmental actors around the world	6.2 Build community and societal resilience	7.2 Enhance Human Resources capability, Leadership, and Staff Expertise and Foster a Positive, Values-Driven Organisational Culture
3. Promote Victims' safety and privacy			4.3 Promote innovation in support services		6.3 Enhance capability and responses to terrorism and mass victimisation and embed victim-centric responses to counter-terrorism strategies and policies	7.3 Ensure Financial Sustainability and Resource Efficiency
4. Drive Safe Justice and Reducing Secondary Victimisation						7.4 Strengthen collaboration with members, partners, and networks
5. Enhance responses for cross border victims						
6. Promote Data, Monitoring, and Enforcement						

1. Objective 1 – Facilitate the Implementation of EU Victims’ Laws and Promote the Strengthening of Victims’ Rights

While the EU has made remarkable progress in advancing victims’ rights, the journey is far from over. Across many Member States, challenges remain in fully implementing existing laws and translating them into meaningful, consistent support for every victim. Too often, victims face a patchwork of protection, justice, and services; varying by location, crime type, or the complexity of the systems they must navigate. This reality is unacceptable.

Our mission is clear: to transform **EU legislation into real, tangible action for victims everywhere.** By driving ambitious reforms at both national and EU levels, embedding truly victim-centred approaches, and building sustainable, coordinated support systems, we can ensure no victim is left behind.

We envision a Europe where **every victim has equal access to high-quality services, robust legal protection, and compassionate, respectful treatment, no matter where they live or what they have endured.** Making this vision a reality demands systemic change:

- Reformed and empowering national strategies
- Integrated, cross-sectoral services that work seamlessly
- Stable, long-term funding for sustainable delivery of support
- Rigorous enforcement of the Victims’ Rights Directive and all related legislation

Together, we can turn promise into practice and build a Europe that truly stands for justice and dignity for all victims.

To achieve this, we will:

1.1. Advance Structural and Strategic Review and Reform

Across Europe, many victims continue to face fragmented, inconsistent support systems. Only a few countries have established national frameworks, leaving duplication, gaps, and competition between services, as outlined in the VSE national victim support framework. Capacity building and information provision are similarly sporadic, with professionals lacking consistent skills in communication, empathy, and trauma-informed approaches, while available training remains ad hoc and short term. This results in victims being poorly treated, blamed, or left uninformed about their rights and available services.

To address these systematic failures, we will support and promote the creation of coordinated national strategies and formalised national coordination mechanisms that embed long-term planning, are strategic, and are evidence based in particular following our main policies such as VSE’s victim support framework, safe justice, communication framework. These frameworks will promote all crime and specific crime support services into national networks, standardise victim needs assessments, establish quality standards and mainstream support across all sectors. We will build operational and national solutions with our members – which reflect international best practices but are adapted to national situations. Drawing on their expertise and relying on their pre-existing relationships and networks, we will work together to build solutions that are ambitious, realistic and relevant.

Crucially, these measures will be embedded as permanent features of national victim support frameworks, supported by sustainable funding and professional training. We will advocate for fair and effective EU and national funding arrangements that prioritise victims’ issues and support sustainable solutions.

1.2. Supporting EU Law Implementation through Sustainable Funding

We will promote the establishment of sustainable, predictable funding for victim support at both national and European level by identifying funding gaps, demonstrating the value of prioritising victims funding, and by supporting governments to develop new funding sources for victims services and rights.

We will push for more appropriate budgets that genuinely reflect the essential nature of victims' rights, reduce administrative burdens, and give organisations- large and small- sufficient time and opportunity to apply.

We will also work for the recognition of NGOs as equal partners in public–private–civil society cooperation, with their expertise fairly compensated instead of always and only being relied upon for free. Victim-related priorities need to be mainstreamed across Europe and international funding programmes, guided by VSE recommendations. Funding should move beyond short-term projects to cover core operational costs through multi-annual budgets. Access for NGOs must be simplified in particular by reducing administrative burdens so that large and small organisations can apply effectively. At the national level, victim support must be embedded in long-term investment and recovery plans as part of comprehensive national frameworks, ensuring services are sustainable, resilient, and not disrupted by shifting political or financial priorities.

To strengthen support for all victims of crime, we will work with EU and international institutions so that victims' rights and needs are mainstreamed across all relevant funding programmes, not only those specifically focused on justice or security. This includes integrating cross-cutting victims' actions into priorities on health, digital transformation, migration, and democracy, while continuing to support targeted measures for specific groups of victims.

From 2026 we will work with our Members for:

- Inclusive funding design that enables civil society to participate on equal terms;
- Recognition of the unique value and lived expertise victim support organisations bring;
- Fair remuneration for contributions to policy, research, training, and implementation.
- Ensuring accessible, sustainable, and equitable funding is not only a matter of fairness; it is essential to building resilient victim support systems and meaningful, rights-based policy.
- Funding programmes that sufficient finance the implementation of rights and services – recognising their essential nature.

1.3. Enhance capacity, Skills, and Knowledge Building

Building the skills and capacity of our members is essential to the successful implementation of victims laws and policies. We will equip professionals and organisations with the skills, tools, and knowledge to implement EU victims' rights effectively. This includes delivering cross-sectoral, skills-based training, developing practical tools for victim empowerment, engaging marginalised communities, and facilitating knowledge exchange on rights and best practices. We will equip members with tools and resources to strengthen the work of first line practitioners and we will carry out research, national capacity-building projects, and collaboration with governments further support this effort

These solutions will be co-created with our members and wider network as well as delivered by them at the local level. VSE's strength is based on in its ability to draw on the expertise of others, bringing this

knowledge together as international best practice. We will achieve this through capacity-building initiatives, a dedicated training academy, and knowledge exchange activities.

1.4. Promote Victims' safety and privacy

We will map protection mechanisms in each country, identify and develop best practice approaches and promote their adoption to ensure consistent implementation. This includes strengthening and streamlining reporting pathways, developing robust risk assessments protocols for all victims and specific groups to be used across a range of sectors. The aim is that victims will have guaranteed access to a wide range of protection measures no matter which country they are in.

Physical protection objectives will be complemented by action to uphold privacy standards through safety-by-design principles, secure handling of victims files, responsible self-regulation by media outlets and reasonable access to data by law enforcement with appropriate safeguards – ensuring a balance between the fundamental rights of victims and the fundamental right to privacy. This will be coupled with action to promote a coherent interpretation of EU data protection rules that facilitates rather than inhibits the sharing of victim information that improves victims access to rights and services.

1.5. Drive Safe Justice and Reducing Secondary Victimisation

Protection must go hand in hand with access to justice. Many victims still face barriers to reporting, from fear of not being believed to complex and intimidating procedures. We will take action to support easy access to timely and clear information, in multiple languages and formats adapted to diverse needs. Coordination across justice, health, law enforcement, and NGOs will guarantee consistent messaging, clear referral pathways, and equal access, with particular focus on marginalised or at-risk groups.

At the same time, we will promote simple, secure reporting mechanisms supported by technology, and push for trauma-informed, respectful justice systems that allow victims to participate meaningfully without risk of secondary victimisation.

Too many victims experience further harm through the very systems meant to help them- being blamed, disbelieved, traumatised during testimony, or portrayed insensitively in the media. This secondary victimisation undermines recovery, discourages victims from seeking justice, and erodes trust in institutions. We aim to address this by supporting institutional reform, victim centric procedures, and training for justice, law enforcement, and media professionals.

1.6. Enhance responses for cross border victims

Victims often struggle to access their rights when crimes are committed across borders, facing gaps in information, fragmented services, and unclear responsibilities between institutions. We will therefore work with International, European and national institutions to help create more effective response frameworks for cross border victims.

This means facilitating reporting of crimes by foreign victims, language support throughout proceedings – including through new technologies, referral to support services across borders, enhanced information solutions to help cross border victims understand their rights and use those rights.

Cross border solutions are not only about putting in place the right infrastructure and tools. It often relies on effective, trusted partnerships and relationships. VSE will work to build these using its own networks, events and training to support cross border co-operation. This means working with national actors but also with EU and international agencies such as CEPOL, EJT, Europol, Eurojust and more. With significant levels of movement and digital technologies enabling crime across the globe, our actions for cross border victims must also include improved cooperation with non-European actors.

Working with our members and wider networks, VSE will continue to develop our own capability to assist cross border victims. We will compile national information on rights and services and provide this in engaging and innovative ways. Information solutions will be coupled with direct referrals to support services. This will include improvements in referring victims between VSE's member organisations and other support organisations across borders as well as working with the private sector to help them connect customers to national services. Our aim is greatly improve the number of victims able to access support services and to do this an efficient and timely way that protects their privacy and data.

Fundamentally, our approach will prioritise empowering victims by improving their access to clear information, enhancing their ability to navigate across borders, and supporting their active participation in decision-making processes related to their cases.

1.7. Promote Data Collection, Monitoring, and Enforcement

Our ability to know whether rights have been fully and correctly implemented relies on data and evidence. VSE has built its own expertise and partnerships to analyse how rights are being enforced so that gaps and challenges can be identified and addressed. We will continue to carry out and expand these activities - **rooted the collection of primary evidence in particularly through victims own experiences and testimonies** but also through engagement with front line practitioners underpinned by science based research methods. Our aim is not only to see what works and doesn't work, it is essential to know why this is the case, so that new solutions can be developed.

This research will be made available directly to national governments as well as to NGOs and European institutions to support reform and enforcement priorities.

2. Objective 2 – Mainstream Victims' Rights, Address the Needs of All Victims, and Enhance Multi-Sectoral Coordination

Protecting and supporting victims is not just the duty of justice systems: it is a collective responsibility that extends across all sectors of society.

Too often, victims' needs are narrowly viewed through the lens of criminal justice, leaving critical gaps victims solutions within healthcare, education, employment, and community life. To build truly resilient and inclusive societies, **victims' rights must be fully recognised and woven into every policy area at both EU and national level.**

This objective is about breaking down silos and embedding victim-centred priorities across all sectors, powered by strong, coordinated action between institutions, civil society, and communities. It also recognises the broader value of working for victims, delivering wide societal benefits that contribute to multiple priorities such as social cohesion, equality, public trust, and resilience.

Our goal is bold and clear: to see victims' rights **mainstreamed into all aspects of our societies**. This means ensuring that victim policy is properly understood, valued, and prioritised as part of broader values like equality, democracy, and social resilience. This requires a whole-of-society approach engaging hospitals, schools, workplaces, and communities, so that action for victims is effective and reaches everyone, especially young people and marginalised groups. This approach not only maximises impact for victims but it also improves the implementation of sectoral priorities which often benefit from victim focused solutions.

This will be accomplished through:

2.1. Mainstreaming Victims' Rights Across Sectors and Policies

We will work with our member organisations to carry out research, guidance and advice to inform diverse sectors about the value and impact of victims' rights, demonstrating why and how victims issues are relevant to their priorities. We will work with them to integrate victims' rights into national and EU strategies beyond the justice field, embedding them in policies on for example health, education, employment, security, and equality.

At the European and international level we will actively engage across EU Directorates-General and international institutions to press for victim priorities to be reflected in funding streams, legislation, and research agendas. Special focus will be placed on prevention and engagement strategies for at-risk youth, fostering their active participation in civic life and reducing secondary victimisation.

2.2. Facilitating and Legitimising CSO Involvement in Policy-Making and Service Delivery

Civil society organisations have played a critical role in delivering victim support and advocating for rights since their development around fifty years ago right up to the present. Without CSOs we would not have the services and rights that we have today. Yet they struggle on a daily basis to be recognised and accepted as part of wider victims infrastructure.

We will foster inclusive policy and funding language that recognises and legitimises their role, while fostering institutionalised partnerships between public authorities, private actors, and CSOs. This includes integrating CSOs into policy development, funding programmes, and public-private partnerships, supporting multi-sector committees, consultation mechanisms, and permanent advisory structures that ensure continuous engagement rather than one-off consultations.

We will work to build trust in CSOs and their capacity to work with government actors, strengthening coordination across sectors and levels of governance. This not only requires increased trust and effort on the side of governments, but CSOs must also demonstrate excellence in their work.

We will support organisations in governance arrangements, service delivery and implementation of standards. Benefiting from the wealth of knowledge and experience across our membership we will pool resources, working together to build the highest performance levels across support, research, and any

other engagement activity. This work including capability in advocacy and policy making is an essential investment that supports democratic resilience and effective victim-centred policy development.

This includes advocating for lower financial contribution requirements in funding programmes and pushing for CSOs to be structurally included in EU-funded project consortia in sectors such as health, education, and security to improve access for grassroots organisations.

2.3. Promoting Cross-Sectoral Coordination

Victims' needs cannot be addressed in silos. We will promote cross-sectoral coordination across EU Directorates and advocate for the European Commission Coordinator for Victims' Rights to lead and connect these efforts through cross-departmental coordination structures.

We will promote structured cooperation between EU institutions by supporting the creation of inter-DG and inter-institutional taskforces on victims' rights. We will advocate to strengthen the role of the European Commission Coordinator for Victims' Rights as a central point of reference together with other key EU and EC co-ordinators.

This mirrors the national level, where coordinated frameworks, committees, and multi-agency mechanisms are essential to avoid fragmentation and ensure consistency. By fostering these connections across both EU and national levels, we will align policies and programmes, making them mutually reinforcing and delivering more coherent and effective victim support across Europe. **Through these bold actions, we aim to place victims' rights at the very core of EU and national policymaking, not as a separate justice concern, but as a vital foundation for creating safe, equal, and truly democratic societies.**

3. Objective 3 – Amplify Victims' Voices and Engagement whilst fostering a culture of respect and solidarity with victims

Victims' voices must be central to advocacy, justice, and policymaking—**not only heard, but genuinely valued and empowered**. A truly victim-centred approach begins with **victims' needs and lived experiences**, balanced with professional and policy expertise, to shape responses that uphold dignity, trust, and meaningful participation. Embedding victims' perspectives into service design, decision-making, and the enforcement of rights is essential to strengthening confidence in the systems intended to protect and support them.

Across Europe, awareness of the importance of victim participation is growing, yet opportunities to engage meaningfully remain inconsistent. Many victims—particularly those in cross-border contexts or from under-represented and hard-to-reach groups—face significant barriers to coming forward and expressing their views. Participation must go beyond relying on the same “usual voices” and instead **actively reach out to and include perspectives that are seldom heard**.

To achieve this, participation must be **ethical, voluntary, protective, and empowering**. Victims who choose to share their experiences must be safeguarded against retraumatisation and supported with appropriate preparation, follow-up care, and access to professional support. Their autonomy, agency, and resilience must be recognised and respected.

Structured and accountable mechanisms should be established to ensure that victims' input is systematically integrated into local, national, and EU-level decision-making. These include:

- Victim advisory councils and consultation panels
- Participatory policymaking forums
- Regular structured feedback systems within services
- Co-design and co-evaluation approaches in service development
- Cross-border participation structures in EU projects and coordination bodies

Through these mechanisms, victims become active partners in designing services, shaping laws and policies, and informing justice processes. **Empowerment is fundamental to enabling victims to seek help, understand their rights, and engage with available support**, contributing to recovery and autonomy.

Empowering victims requires more than formal structures—it demands a broader cultural shift in how society understands and treats victims. A culture of respect, solidarity, and empathy must be fostered among:

- **The general public**, through awareness campaigns, public education, media engagement, and initiatives that counter stigma, blame, and harmful stereotypes.
- **Practitioners**, through training in trauma-informed communication, ethics, and respectful participatory practice.
- **Victims' families, peers, and social networks**, by strengthening their capacity to provide informed emotional and practical support.

This can be achieved through wide ranging actions including public campaigns that promote positive narratives of dignity, resilience, and solidarity. Training programmes for justice, health, social services, and community organisations on respectful engagement and collaborative decision-making. Empowering bystanders and communities to support victims and challenge harmful attitudes. Encouraging responsible media reporting that avoids sensationalism and prioritises victim dignity.

Our goal is bold and transformative: **a Europe where victims, together with support organisations, practitioners and policymakers, lead public conversations, influence policy debates, and co-design services that respond to real needs**. A Europe where respect, solidarity, and participation are embedded across all systems and cultures, supported by strong cross-border cooperation ensuring equal protection and access to justice regardless of where a victim lives or where a crime occurs.

Through collective commitment and coordinated action, victims will not only be heard—they will **shape the systems that shape their lives**

To achieve this, we will:

3.1. Improve Public Communication, Messaging and Narrative Framing, and Social Awareness

We will develop and promote victim-centred communication strategies that adapt to changing political and social contexts. We will work with media, civil society, and institutions to create empathetic, inclusive narratives that highlight the link between victims' rights, democratic values, and the rule of law. These strategies will promote positive victims' narratives, challenge stereotypes and myths, and increase

empathy, understanding, and solidarity by engaging directly with victims. Campaigns will focus on challenging stereotypes, increasing public empathy, and embedding victims' rights into national narratives on well-being and social cohesion. We will also engage and educate youth and communities, fostering civic participation and resilience through empathy programmes, school partnerships, and youth-led campaigns and initiatives with local stakeholders — both private and national — to enhance engagement, including through the Youth Platform.

3.2. Enable victims to be heard and participate in victims' policies and solutions

VSE will ensure that victims are meaningfully engaged in shaping the systems that affect their lives—both through structures created within VSE and by supporting governments and partner organisations to establish their own sustainable participation mechanisms. Our approach prioritises safety, accessibility, and active outreach to ensure diversity and inclusion, particularly for under-represented and hard-to-reach groups.

Within VSE, we will create or expand structures such as our victims rights platform, **victim advisory groups, consultation panels, and thematic focus groups** to guide VSE policies, projects, and service design. We will enhance **safe and supportive engagement frameworks**, including trauma-informed processes, preparation, follow-up, and confidentiality safeguards. Our aim is to ensure that in development of our policies, advocacy, training, projects and more we have **feedback and consultation mechanisms** for victims through **safe and supported participation frameworks**.

This work will be reflected in our engagement with International and national actors where we will promote inclusion of victim participation standards in **legislation, policy frameworks, and funding conditions**. In practical terms we will help **develop formal participation platforms** (e.g., advisory councils, committees, consultation mechanisms, working groups). We will provide tools, guidelines, and expertise to build **ethical, accessible, and trauma-informed engagement models**. Across all these activities we will explore how to **actively reach diverse and seldom-heard victims including through** accessible, multilingual, and flexible participation options, including digital engagement and anonymous contributions, and by engaging with grass roots, specialist organisations working with specific groups.

4. Objective 4 - Maximise access to high quality support for all victims

Every victim of crime deserves timely, compassionate, and effective support — no matter who they are, where they live, or when they seek help. Yet the reality across Europe remains uneven: access to support services varies widely, systems are too often fragmented or difficult to navigate, and many victims still fall through the gaps, particularly those facing cross-border situations, structural inequalities, or social marginalisation. Achieving real justice means ensuring that support is not a privilege but a guaranteed right available to all victims, without barriers or delay.

Victim Support Europe is committed to driving a fundamental shift from scattered responses to **coordinated, integrated, and victim-centred support ecosystems** that enable healing, safety, and long-term recovery. This objective focuses on building systems that are accessible, equitable, high-quality, and responsive to victims' diverse needs — delivered through strong national frameworks, rigorous standards, and innovative solutions that meet victims where they are.

To realise this vision, VSE will:

- **Ensure access and equity**, transforming national support landscapes into coordinated and inclusive models that deliver the right support at the right time and in the right way.
- **Drive quality assurance**, embedding shared standards, accountability, and accreditation to ensure consistency and long-term impact.
- **Promote innovation**, developing new technologies, modern service approaches, and cross-border collaboration to expand access, reduce stigma, and support confident help-seeking.

Through these actions, support services will not only respond to immediate needs but will also enable long-term recovery, dignity, and autonomy. The following sub-objectives set out how VSE will work with governments, partners, and communities to make high-quality support a reality for every victim, everywhere.

4.1. Ensure Accessible, Equitable and Inclusive Services, Continuity of Care and Long-Term Recovery

Despite remarkable progress across the EU, far too many victims still face obstacles in accessing the support they desperately need, especially when navigating complex, fragmented systems or cross-border challenges. Victim Support Europe's fourth strategic objective is a commitment to break down these barriers by championing **integrated, high-quality national victim support frameworks** that guarantee timely, trauma-informed care for every victim of crime.

Our aspiration is clear: national service landscapes must be thoroughly assessed and transformed to deliver **coordinated, victim-centred support models** fully aligned with EU standards. **We will support the development of integrated national support models by promoting the establishment of coordinated national frameworks that bring together government, civil society, and other sectors under one strategy.** These frameworks include formal committees and coordination mechanisms, stable funding, and formal decision-making structures to ensure victim services are sustainable and embedded as permanent features of national systems.

We will ensure accessible, equitable, and inclusive services by supporting the establishment of victim support organisations across all countries, guaranteeing access to the right service, in the right way, at the right time. This includes services available in multiple formats — face-to-face, 116 006 helplines, mobile teams, online platforms, and innovative solutions such as facility dogs, AI, and new technologies. Services must be accessible in terms of location, availability (opening hours, wait times), and disability access, and provide court accompaniment and legal information and assistance. **Post-crime support will include shelter and emergency accommodation, medical care, psychosocial support, and long-term safety planning and follow-up after cases are closed.** Services must be inclusive, culturally sensitive, and tailored to specific needs (e.g. LGBTQIA+ victims, people with disabilities, elderly victims), with proactive outreach to hard-to-reach and underrepresented victims.

At the heart of our work, will be the consultation processes, working groups, and knowledge exchange with our members who have been at the frontline of delivering services for five decades. They bring together not only the expertise and innovations essential to success, but also an intimate understanding of national and local landscapes to which services must be adapted.

4.2. Promote High-Quality Services through Standards and Accreditation

We will promote the adoption and implementation of VSE Support Standards for all-crime services and 116 006 helplines and expand them to specialist support services to ensure that every victim receives consistent, safe, and trauma-informed care. To help VSE members meet these standards, we will invest in practical tools and capacity-building programmes, including tailored guidance, structured training, mentoring and peer learning, multi-country projects, and study visits to high-performing organisations. We will also develop implementation resources such as checklists, self-assessment tools, templates, and benchmarking frameworks that enable organisations to monitor progress, identify gaps, and continuously improve practice.

To reinforce accountability and quality assurance, we will establish mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, and learning across the VSE network, enabling members to share challenges, successes, and innovative approaches. We will work to embed VSE Accreditation Standards at European and national levels and to secure formal recognition of our standards from governments, EU institutions, and funding bodies, encouraging their integration into national legislation, strategic frameworks, and funding criteria. By building strong evidence of impact and collaborating with research institutions and external evaluators, we will demonstrate the value of standards-based systems and promote adoption beyond the VSE network.

Through these efforts, VSE will foster a culture of professionalism, trust, and accountability across Europe. By supporting members to implement high-quality standards and by advocating for their institutional recognition, we will ensure that all victims — regardless of where they live or which organisation they turn to — can rely on consistent, high-quality support throughout their recovery journey

4.3. Promote Innovation in Support Services

We will promote innovation in support services by supporting the development of new technologies and new ways of delivering and managing support systems — including multi-agency centres, facility dogs, AI-driven solutions, and digital platforms. We will promote the establishment of 116 006 helpline across all Member States — in line with VSE's helpline standards, creating a lifeline available to every victim in need. Alongside powerful public awareness campaigns, we will break down stigma and encourage safe, confident reporting of crime.

Together, these actions will transform scattered, fragmented responses into unified, compassionate frameworks of care, recognition, and justice — building sustainable, high-quality support systems that truly serve every victim.

5. Objective 5: Pursue victims' issues and victim-centric solutions in the wider world

5.1. Advocate for victims' rights and services across the world

Victims' rights know no borders—and neither do our efforts to uphold and advance them. Whilst VSE's priority is the development of solutions across Europe, this objective embodies Victim Support Europe's commitment to nurturing a global culture of justice, empathy, and empowerment for victims everywhere. We will advocate for victims' rights and services across the world, engaging with international institutions such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and other intergovernmental bodies, as well as with governments and NGOs, to promote the development and implementation of victims' rights and services — in particular through VSE's core policies.

By elevating victims' voices, ensuring their active participation in shaping laws and services, and building strong, rights-aware communities, we strive to extend the impact and influence of EU victims' rights far beyond Europe's borders. We also have much to learn from organisations and governments from around the world. In particular, **VSE will work with and support its sister networks, Victim Support Asia and Victim Support Americas, while promoting the creation of new regional networks in other continents to strengthen the global victims' movement.**

Partnership and collaboration at the international level will therefore form an integral part of developing enhanced solutions in Europe. Together, we are creating a world where every victim is heard, valued, and supported—no matter where they are.

At the heart of this objective lies a simple premise: victims must not only be supported, they must be seen, heard, and actively involved in shaping the systems that affect their lives. Through strategic diplomacy, public engagement, and the creative use of storytelling and partnerships, we will raise awareness of victims' experiences and promote the EU Victims' Rights Directive as a global benchmark.

We will join forces with journalists, artists, academia, researchers, and civil society champions to humanise victims' stories and drive legal reforms that align with the highest EU standards. Whether promoting the Victims' Rights Directive as a model for others, supporting its adaptation in pre-accession countries, or empowering youth to become active civic leaders, our mission is clear: to weave victim-centred approaches into the heart of both national and global dialogues.

Together, we will amplify victims' voices and transform justice systems worldwide to be more accessible, inclusive, safer, fairer, and more resilient.

5.2. Build Delivery and Service Capability of Organisations and Governmental Actors Around the World

Whilst recognising challenges and barriers to working globally, we will pursue activities to help build the delivery and service capability of organisations and governmental actors around the world. This includes supporting national governments, public institutions, and NGOs in developing and improving victim support frameworks, standards, and services that are sustainable, inclusive, and trauma-informed.

We will work to:

- Enhance victim and community participation in policy and service design by embedding co-creation methodologies in legislative processes, reducing secondary victimisation, and strengthening multi-agency collaboration.
- Strengthen victim-led organisations, supporting transnational networks, peer-led support structures, and advocacy platforms.
- Engage and educate youth and communities, fostering civic participation and resilience through empathy programmes, school partnerships, and youth-led campaigns.

These ambitious goals will be brought to life through a dynamic range of actions — from cross-border awareness campaigns and international training programmes to powerful, evidence-based advocacy at global platforms like the **UN, OSCE, Council of Europe, OECD, OAS, ASEAN, and African Union**.

6. Objective 6: Build Individual Resilience Frameworks at the EU Level, Strengthen Responses to Terrorism and Mass Victimisation

6.1. Strengthen individual resilience to trauma and victimisation

In an era marked by rising polarisation, disinformation, violent extremism, and complex social challenges, building resilience at individual, community, and institutional levels is not just beneficial but essential for maintaining social cohesion, democratic values, and the protection of vulnerable groups.

Victim Support Europe's sixth strategic objective reflects **resilience as a core element of victim support and civil protection systems**. Our approach goes beyond response: it is about building the **strength to cope and recover, the adaptability to grow, and the connection to thrive** after trauma and crisis.

We will advocate for policies that integrate resilience-building into all areas of society — including education, healthcare, social services, and justice systems. VSE is at the beginning of developing expertise and strategies in this area. The next five years will be marked by efforts to build coherent, in depth solutions supported by practical tools that promote coping skills, emotional literacy, self-care, and self-agency, and support the implementation of these solutions in schools, workplaces, justice systems, and among the general public.

We will also promote the integration of resilience tools within victim support services, ensuring referral and access to long-term healing and social reintegration pathways beyond the immediate remit of support services.

Through these measures, we aim to create a Europe where people feel psychologically safe, emotionally supported, and deeply connected to one another — a Europe where victims, especially those from marginalised and underrepresented communities, do not just find care but shape the conversations and policies that define our shared future

6.2. Build community and societal resilience

At the community level, we will support wider national and community efforts to strengthen resilience against manipulation, polarisation, and hate by developing and promoting good practices that bring communities together both before and after crises. We will research, develop, and promote permanent mechanisms for community building and resilience, including training and community engagement programmes that foster solidarity and mutual trust.

We will develop campaigns aimed at uniting communities around shared responsibility, collective strength, and unity in diversity, while helping Member States align national strategies with EU standards. We will advocate for resilience strategies that include a focus on personal resilience and not only structural resilience, and we will promote resilience priorities in broader strategies such as counter-terrorism, civil protection, and democracy building — including those addressing crimes and attacks against people defending democratic values.

Across both individual and community dimensions, we will promote inclusive, values-based narratives that reduce fragmentation and foster solidarity. Turning this vision into reality means building systems that are not only responsive but truly resilient — systems that walk with victims from the moment of crisis to full recovery.

6.3. Enhance capability and responses to terrorism and mass victimisation and embed victim-centric responses to counter-terrorism strategies and policies

At the heart of this vision are trauma-informed, rights-based frameworks that guide both national and cross-border responses to terrorism and mass violence. Because true resilience cannot be built in isolation — it is built together, with empathy, justice, and courage.

We will continue advancing policies and operational solutions addressing terrorism and mass victimisation, promoting them at both national and international levels. Key to this will be continuing the work initiated through the EU Centre of Expertise for Victims of Terrorism (EUCVT). VSE will launch its Centre of Excellence for Victims of Terrorism and Mass victimisation. Through the centre we will continue to promote the foundational policies for addressing the needs of victims of terrorism whilst developing complementary tools and solutions facilitate implementation of those policies at the national level. Building a European and international community of experts to support the development of expertise and the exchange of knowledge will be a priority alongside the delivery of practical training for frontline practitioners and policy makers.

We will strengthen VSE's international response network to support cross-border victims of terrorism and mass victimisation and foster the development of cross-border, multi-sector cooperation channels that unite state and civil society actors in responding to such incidents.

Our strategy also places survivors and victim associations at the heart of policy development, recognising their lived experience as a powerful force for change. At its core, this objective is about more than support: it is about safeguarding and shielding democracy itself. By building resilient individuals and inclusive societies, we don't just protect victims of extremism — we help heal nations and defend the values that unite us.

7. Objective 7: Strengthen VSE's Organisational Capacity and Influence, Further Developing Policies, Position Papers, and Research Reports

As the leading European umbrella organisation for victim support, Victim Support Europe's **credibility** and **influence** hinge on our ability to operate with **efficiency**, **clear vision**, and **unwavering commitment** to our mission. Objective 7 sets a **strategic foundation** for the future — a comprehensive internal agenda designed to **future-proof VSE** through **robust governance structures**, **empowered and skilled staff**, **sound financial stewardship**, and a **resilient organisational culture** deeply rooted in our core **values** and **purpose**.

In an ever-changing world where victim support needs are growing more **complex** and **diverse**, VSE will rise to the challenge by significantly enhancing its **operational infrastructure**. This includes investing in **modern digital tools**, **streamlining processes**, and adopting **data-driven decision-making** to improve **responsiveness** and **impact**. **Diversifying funding sources** remains a critical priority; by expanding beyond traditional EU grants to include partnerships with **international bodies**, **philanthropic foundations**, and **private sector stakeholders**, we will secure the **financial sustainability** needed to innovate and scale our work.

Central to this evolution is our **people** — the heart and soul of VSE. We are committed to fostering a **supportive** and **inclusive workplace** that prioritises **staff wellbeing**, **continuous professional development**, and **leadership capacity-building**. By nurturing a **dynamic, expert-driven team** equipped with **cutting-edge knowledge** and **skills**, we will position VSE as a **thought leader** capable of shaping **EU policy**, spearheading **innovative research**, and advocating effectively on behalf of victims across Europe.

Furthermore, strengthening our membership and **partnerships** across the **civil society**, **governmental**, and **international landscape** will amplify our **collective impact**. Deepening collaboration with **victim-led organisations**, **frontline service providers**, and key stakeholders will ensure that **victims' voices** remain central in **justice reforms** and **policy development**.

This objective transcends organisational growth — it is about building a **resilient foundation** that **empowers millions** of victims to be **heard**, **protected**, and **supported** throughout their recovery. By fortifying VSE internally, we reinforce our ability to be a **catalyst for change**, ensuring victims' **rights** are upheld and that **no victim is ever forgotten**.

Through this objective, we aim to:

7.1. Ensure Strong Internal Governance through Secure IT, Data, and Information Management Practices

Ensure internal governance mechanisms that allow VSE to operate effectively and to the highest quality, in line with its values of transparency, integrity, efficiency, and maximising impact. We will ensure safe and efficient operations in compliance with EU standards (e.g. GDPR, environmental policies), while promoting knowledge sharing and data-driven decision-making.

VSE will continue to invest in advanced digital tools and secure IT systems to safeguard sensitive victim data, strengthen cybersecurity, and maintain data integrity. These systems will underpin our ability to protect data, enhance organisational efficiency, and ensure compliance with the highest ethical and operational standards.

A Data and Evidence Repository will be established to collect, analyse, and disseminate comprehensive data on victimisation trends, service outcomes, and policy impacts across Europe. This platform will provide real-time insights into emerging risks, service gaps, and the effectiveness of current support mechanisms, strengthening VSE's role as an evidence-based organisation that drives impactful policy and practice.

7.2. Enhance Human Resources Capability, Leadership, and Staff Expertise, and Foster a Positive, Values-Driven Organisational Culture

VSE will develop its Training Academy to strengthen on boarding, continuous capacity-building, and personal development for staff and volunteers. Recruitment will focus increasingly on skills acquisition, combining permanent staff with volunteers and external expert consultants to enhance delivery capability. Senior staff will participate in leadership development initiatives, ensuring continuity and professional growth. We will develop a remuneration and benefits system that maintains VSE's competitiveness and ability to attract and retain high-quality talent.

We will foster an organisational culture rooted in respect, inclusion, excellence, professionalism, and shared purpose, strengthening internal cohesion and contributing to VSE's credibility and stakeholder trust. This includes supporting the wellbeing, growth, and performance of staff and volunteers, while embedding responsibility and accountability at all levels — individual, leadership, and organisational — to ensure the capability and commitment to deliver.

By embedding these core values into every aspect of our operations — from leadership practices to daily interactions — we will cultivate a workplace where diversity is celebrated, collaboration thrives, and every voice is valued.

7.3. Ensure Financial Sustainability and Resource Efficiency

VSE will enhance its financial management system, using the latest technologies to maximise efficiency and security, combined with robust procedural rules and project management processes.

Diversifying funding sources remains a top priority. We will expand beyond traditional EU grants to include partnerships with international bodies, philanthropic foundations, and private-sector stakeholders.

We will continue to build our fundraising capability by improving donations and sponsorship, developing innovative, affordable business services that strengthen the capacity of VSE members, partners and the private sector while generating sustainable resources for VSE. These actions will create new, values-driven sources of unrestricted funding, ensuring long-term sustainability without compromising our non-profit ethos.

Through enhanced income generation and long-term financial planning, we will strengthen VSE's resilience and capacity for growth. By optimising resource allocation and maintaining transparency and cost-effectiveness, we will secure a stable financial foundation that supports our mission and maximises impact.

As technology evolves, VSE will leverage artificial intelligence to enhance efficiency, accessibility, and foresight across victim-support services. AI-driven tools can improve early identification of victims' needs, automate translation and accessibility functions, strengthen case-management and data analysis, and support evaluation of policy impact. Used transparently and ethically, these tools will allow members to deliver faster, more accurate, and more inclusive support. By promoting responsible AI development

rooted in safety and human rights, VSE aims to set a standard for how technology can empower victims and strengthen civil-society action.

7.4 Strengthen Collaboration with Members, Partners, and Networks

VSE's success depends on its strong network of members and stakeholders. We will continue to expand our membership, enhance existing services, and develop new ones — including tools for knowledge exchange, training, communication, case management, and event coordination. This work is critical to the success of VSE recognising that the implementation of all our actions relies heavily on our partnership and on the expertise of our members.

VSE will deepen collaboration with its members and strategic partners by fostering robust networks that support joint delivery, shared learning, and coordinated advocacy. Expanding the membership base and building cross-sector alliances will reinforce service delivery on the ground and strengthen VSE's position as a key voice for victims at both EU and regional levels.

Through these partnerships, we will influence policy, drive the implementation of victims' rights, and ensure consistent, high-quality support services across Europe. By linking members, experts, and institutions, VSE will continue to act as a bridge between grassroots experience and European policymaking — ensuring that all victims' voices shape the future of support systems.