

Newsletter

Newsletter Victim Support Europe

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Victim Support Europe
June 2012 No 1/2012

From our President

NEW START FOR CRIME VICTIMS AHEAD!

This year has been an exciting time in Europe for victims. We are hopeful that in 2012 we will get agreement on a new directive for victims of crime in the European Union. Formal adoption is expected to come in early 2013 with implementation starting in 2016 onwards. Member organisations throughout Europe continue to struggle with the impact of the financial crisis and we have been pleased where appropriate to support. VSE is also awaiting the outcome of an European Commission Operations grant for 2012 to help cement our administrative base in Brussels.

During the next 6 months a number of important events are being planned. The VSE European meeting and the CABVIS conference is being held in Lisbon Portugal between 26 and 29 September 2012. This will be an important event and we are encouraging members and others to come along, more details will follow shortly. We

are also expecting the European Parliament with cross party support to host a major hearing and evidence session sometime in November. Funding allowing we expect to host full general meeting of VSE the programme to co-incide with the proposed event. More details will follow in due course.

Interest in joining VSE continues to grow across Europe and more widely throughout world. The Executive Board has just recently agreed to undertake a review of our membership policy. This of course will be a matter for consideration by a future general meeting. A new look website is in the early stages of development and will allow us to better communicate our message to those interested in supporting victims of crime.

We know that many governments in our member organisations countries are now considering new legislation on victims rights. Let us know of these new developments. If we can help we will. The Executive Board is working hard and support you and victims of crime in Europe so keep in touch.

David McKenna

Reports

About the Newsletter

After some time of working without a staff member in Brussels we are now able to restart our Newsletter. The responsibility to deliver the Newsletters is with me. Any suggestions are very welcome.

Until we have a new layout we will continue with the old design. This time there will be no contributions from our members. But for the next edition we call for reports. We will be able to put in contributions with a maximum of half a page (250-300 words). We have to reserve the right to shorten if there are too many or too large contributions. Please send them to me until end of July. Please name also one person in your organisation as contact person for the Newsletter.

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Our Office in Brussels



My name is Hélène Heinrichs and I am in charge of Victim Support Europe's office in Brussels. I am 37, Belgian and French

speaking. I am married and I have 3 children. I have been living for more than twelve years in the European quarter in Brussels. Before joining VSE, I worked five years for an EU consultancy helping human rights NGOs to apply for EU funding, representing them in Brussels and organizing for them conferences and events in the European Parliament. I have a master degree in Germanic languages and I can work in English, French and German. I also have good knowledge of Dutch.

I started working for Victim Support Europe at the end of February 2012. Since then my tasks have been among others to organize the technical aspects of the office, to centralize information and communication with members as well as applicants for membership, to coordinate meetings, to deal with finances and accounting and to answer requests from external partners. Not all these tasks are completed yet but VSE now has a dedicated staff member permanently based in Brussels. However, much more work is needed to achieve our goals: developing useful services for all our members and further strengthening the voice of Victim Support Europe among the stakeholders at EU level.

In 2012, we intend to move to new premises as our current office still is a temporary solution. We also wish to expand the team and employ additional staff based in Brussels provided funding is available.

All these challenges are a great source of

motivation for me and I am very happy to have joined Victim Support Europe at the beginning of this new and important chapter in the history of the network.

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Report on 7th March event: The Voice of Victims in Europe

Victims of crime express their demands for stronger rights

On the 7 March 2012, Victim Support Europe's event "*The Voice of Victims in Europe*" took place in the EU Parliament. The aim of the event was to highlight victim issues and to gather support for strengthening the rights of victims of crime in Europe, in particular through the new EU Directive establishing minimum standards on the support, rights and services to victims of crime.

The event attracted speakers from all the main Institutions involved in negotiating the new Directive on victims' rights; namely European Commission, European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. This event was also a chance for people affected by crime to make their voice heard. Victims from across Europe addressed the audience by sharing their experiences of victimisation

and demonstrate practical examples why stronger rights for victims are needed.

The event itself was hosted by three members of the European Parliament – Arlene McCarthy, Alyn Smith and Axel Voss, who all expressed their interest and support for stronger rights for victims of crime. David McKenna outlined the importance of stronger rights for victims after which Frida Wheldon explained the main rights and priorities that Victim Support Europe has highlighted throughout the Directive negotiations.

The EU Institutions then provided input into the debate and highlighted their different priorities ahead of the final negotiations on the Directive. The EU Parliament was represented by Ms Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio (MEP), Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, and Dr. Antonyia Parvanova (MEP), Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality. Both representatives expressed their sincere interest in the victim field and their aspiration to deliver stronger rights for victims. Ms Jiménez- Becerril Barrio and Dr. Parvanova both expressed a particular interest in stronger rights for victims with special needs, including victims of gender-based violence and terrorism. They also highlighted that the Parliament wants to strengthen the requirement on Member States to conduct individual assessments to identify any special needs and required additional protective measures to be put in place.

The Council of the European Union was represented by Mr. Carsten Kristian Vollmer, who is a Danish Presidency representative and Head of the Council delegation in the Directive negotiations. Mr. Vollmer expressed his support for the Directive and that the adoption of a strong Directive is a main priority for the Danish EU Presidency.

As the last voice of European legislators, the EU Commission was represented by Mr Telmo Baltazar, Member of the Cabinet of Commissioner Reding, Vice-President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship. In his presentation, he focused on three main points:

- the Directive should be horizontal – similar standards, systems and rights should be available equally for all victims of crime throughout the EU. The Directive should therefore cover all victims of crime, not focus on particular groups of victims
- the Directive should be ambitious yet realistic, by developing stronger rights for victims without adding unrealistic burden regarding implementation
- in addition to developing stronger rights, the Directive will hopefully serve to change the mentality in not just criminal justice agencies but also into other services, such as social services regarding how

victims of crime are treated

Mr. Baltazar explained that Vice-President Reding will continue to work with the Parliament and the Danish Presidency to improve the rights for victims of crime.

In the final part of the event, six service users from across Europe (Czech Republic, Sweden, Scotland, Portugal, Austria and England) addressed the audience by explaining the practical and emotional challenges and experiences they had faced in the aftermath of crime. These excellent presentations gave a very personal and heart-felt ending to the event, providing a clear reminder to the negotiators why stronger rights for victims are so important in 21st century Europe.

To sum up, it was a very successful event and an important step towards a stronger Directive for victims of crime. All the key Institutions and negotiators were present and it was very encouraging to hear them all express their interest in improving the rights and protection for victims of crime across Europe.

Frida Wheldon

Head of Policy

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EU Directive establishing minimum standards on the support, rights and services to victims of crime

Service in the court of The Hague or the local office of Victim Support the Netherlands.

Update on negotiations

On 13 June the Commission, the Council and the Parliament reached an agreement on the final version of the text. We will inform our members as soon as we have more details.

VSE co-hosts successfully Victimology Symposium

Almost 500 academics, practitioners and policymakers met in The Hague (20-24 May) to attend the XIV World Society of Victimology Symposium. This symposium is held every three years and the 2012 edition was organized by Intervict (Tilburg), LINC (Leuven) and Victim Support Europe. The official opening was done by Secretary of State Fred Teeven (safety & justice) in the monumental Hall of Knights.

The symposium focused on three themes: victim's rights, transitional justice, and trauma & resilience. Among the plenary speakers were Alex Hinton, Harvey Weinstein, Rama Mani, Kathleen Daly and Ilse Vande Walle. The programme offered more than 300 workshop presentations, panel sessions and round tables.

Various site visits were included in the programme; participants could visit the International Criminal Court, the Yugoslavia Tribunal, the Victim Information

Projects

CABVIS

CABVIS is a VSE project run by APAV. Within the framework of this project a leaflet entitled "Victim of crime in another EU Country" has already been developed in 10 languages.

A set of seminars will be organized by the partners of this project.

The target audience for this set of Seminars (one in each partner country and one final international seminar) is all professionals that deal directly with victims of crime (with special focus on judicial practitioners and victim support workers).

The Seminar aims at:

- Identifying the problems these entities face in their daily work;
- Promoting debate on cross cutting topics in the field of victims' rights;
- Raising awareness to victims' needs and promote better responses to victims' prime needs;
- Establish an effective communication network between the different entities.

The first seminar was in Porto in February. The second CABVIS Seminar took place in Scotland, in Edinburgh, in March 2012, and already in April this same year Weisser Ring Germany's Seminar was held in Trier. By July, London will host a similar event and in September Slachtofferhulp Nederland will gather Dutch judicial

practitioners and victim support workers with the same purpose.

By the end of September, the project's final Seminar will take place in Lisbon. This will be a more intense Seminar, open to even more participants, with a fully European wide scope. We hope that by that time the new Directive will already be adopted and we can have a clearer idea of what the new opportunities and challenges there will be for all those that work with improvement of victims' rights and needs on their sight.

Latvian Project: Opportunity to participate for VS training staff

VSE is partner to an EU project run by PROVIDUS developing victim support services in Latvia. This project has a holistic view on crime. It has a larger focus than just focusing on victims of crime as such. Each partner has to develop case studies. The aim is to develop Victim Support organisations.

PROVIDUS is now looking for national VS training staff who would be interested in providing training to staff/volunteers in the set-up of victim support services in Latvia. All costs for the trainer(s) are covered by separate EU funding. For more information regarding the project and if any of your staff would like to participate, please contact:

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Seminar CARONTE – Assistance to the Family and/or Friends of Victims of Homicide Lisbon, 21st and 22nd June

The homicide of someone to whom one is connected to by family or affectionate ties, is surely a highly traumatic event. The loss can cause intense suffering and significant changes in one's personal, family and social life.

For the first time, the professionals from the judiciary, police and victim support will debate in a Seminar their experiences and share their knowledge on the assistance to the family and/or friends of victims of homicide.

OG 2012: successful application!

We are delighted to inform our members that VSE's application for an Operating Grant has just been approved by the European Commission.

Upcoming events

- Seminar "Victims' Rights: a step forward" that will take place on the 27th and 28th of September in Lisbon.
- Annual meeting in Lisbon to be held on the 29th of September 2012
- Annual conference in Edinburgh in May 2013

Reminder for members: Please send your contribution until end of July!

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