



Roundtable discussion Victims of Crime in Europe: A broader NGO Perspective

Monday 8 September 2014 (11h00 to 16h00)

REPORT

Introduction

The roundtable discussion “Victims of Crime in Europe: A broader NGO Perspective” was held in Victim Support Europe’s office in Brussels and was led by Victor Jammers, Executive Board Member of Victim Support Europe.

The five following international NGOs were represented: the JUSTICIA European Rights Network, Fair Trials International, Missing Children Europe, the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) and the European Network Against Racism (ENAR).

The purpose of this roundtable was to bring together a group of representatives from international NGOs dealing with victims of crime in order to better get to know each other’s work, to exchange ideas and to discuss possible areas of cooperation.

The roundtable started with the introduction of the participants and their respective organisations. Based on this presentation part, themes for discussion were identified, all focused on the Directive establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime:

- 1) Transposition of the directive into national law
- 2) Implementation of the directive
- 3) Training activities required by the directive
- 4) Monitoring of the implementation
- 5) Information material about the directive for victims and service providers

Summary/Results of the discussion on each topic

1) Transposition of the directive into national law

All NGOs represented at the roundtable are working on the transposition from their own perspective. Therefore, the participants agreed that it could be useful to have national

meetings of the member organisations of their respective networks to which national government officials could be invited. These meetings would help to draft a roadmap and these national roadmaps could be collected to map the progress made in relation to the transposition. Good examples of transposition could also be identified and promoted in member states where the transposition is problematic.

2) Implementation of the directive

All agreed that informing the national service providers about the new rights of victims is a key aspect as this will enable them to challenge their national authorities in case the directive is not properly implemented in their country.

Another key aspect mentioned is the necessity to have enough funding available for the implementation.

It is also important to see what has already been done, also in overlap with other directives like for example the Directive on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings which had to be transposed by 27 October 2013. Existing structures could be used to implement the new rights of victims.

The practical implementation of the directive will be to a large extent the responsibility of the police. Therefore, all agreed that EU police representatives should be at the table to discuss their difficulties related to the implementation. Both police officers and their managers should be sensitized.

EU police officers have a meeting end of October in Germany. Maria McDonald, representing JUSTICIA, proposed to contact them to ask what the possibilities are to participate in their meeting.

3) Training activities required by the directive

The biggest challenge regarding training is how to reach all actors involved in victim support across the 28 Member States. The only method which could reach wide enough would be an online training. The US example of OVCTTAC (Office for Victims of Crime – Training and Technical Assistance Center) which offers different types of training for the different target groups all over the US (see : <https://www.ovttac.gov/>) is mentioned.

However, the development of this kind of online training for all EU Member States would require EU funding and this is something the NGOs represented at the roundtable could promote together to the European Commission. The second solution in case no EU funding would be available for the development of a pan-European online training would be to develop a common framework for the training which would have to be implemented by each Member State. The third solution would be a classic train-the-trainer model but it is agreed that this model does not reach wide enough.

4) Monitoring of the implementation

When monitoring should start and how it should look like are the crucial questions. All agree that we should not wait for the report by the Member States as they have a 2-year deadline to report on their implementation.

The European Commission might probably launch a call for tenders for consultancies who would do the monitoring on their behalf. It is suggested that we could write together terms of reference for this tender procedure and discuss them with the EC.

5) Information material about the directive for victims and service providers

Victims should be informed about the complaints procedures if their rights are breached. They should also get compensation if the breach cannot satisfactorily be remedied. This could be included in the monitoring issue.

Possible models of complaints procedures:

- Ombudsman (too slow in answering requests and therefore not efficient)
- Canadian model: Ombudsman for victims of crime (fix it as quickly as possible)
- Telephone line for victims which they could call to get advice if their rights have been breached

There should also be EU-wide campaign to inform victims about their rights. Examples of efficient ways of informing victims are mentioned:

- The Infovictims project (<http://apav.pt/infovictims/index.php/en/>)
- The system developed by the Avon and Somerset Police (<https://asp.trackmycrime.police.uk/>)

Conclusion

All agree that the roundtable was very useful as tangible possible areas of cooperation were identified. Other international NGOs like Amnesty International and ILGA Europe would like to take part as well in the future.

It is suggested that a follow-up meeting could take place in Dublin around the Victims' Rights Alliance conference (14 November 2014) for those who will be attending.