

**Friday, May 16, 2014**

Victim Support Europe is the voice of victims in Europe

This voice was heard yesterday through Gisela Mayer.

She was announced as the director of the Foundation against violence in schools.

But she also is the mother of one of the teachers killed in the shooting in the school of Winnenden in 2009.

She told us an impressive story on the experiences of families and friends after the shooting.

For example media installing videocameras on the roof of a minivan, trying to catch a glimpse of the funeral of one of the victims.

Gisela Mayer asked the media to show respect to victims and their families, to give the time to find the words to describe the event.

And she asked them to show empathy: real interest in the persons they are interviewing, not a search for cruel details.

Her voice was heard yesterday by the journalist Joshua Rosenberg who gave her instant advice how to deal with the media: appoint a spokesman, let him give information to the press and ensure that someone makes an arrangement with the media.

An arrangement when to take pictures, when to film and which journalist is going to write the report for all the media.

This conference created the opportunity to hear the voice of the victim and to come up with practical solutions.

That's what Victim Support Europe is about.

Victim Support Europe's mission is to strengthen the rights of all victims of crime in Europe.

Olimpia Monaco described the road we came from Tampere in 1999 to The Hague in 2004 and Stockholm in 2009.

In 10 days, the elections for the European Parliament take place. Some parties will win, others will lose, a new political balance will be created. In the period ahead, a new European Commission will be appointed.

And the commission will write its programme for the next 5 years. Most likely it will be called the Rome Programme, as it is unlikely that they will have finalised the text in the remaining weeks of the Greek presidency.

Victims and their rights should be in this Rome Programme.

The Victim Support Europe Manifesto, which was published in November last year contains all the necessary ingredients for the victim's paragraph in this Rome Programme.

Full implementation of the 2012 Directive is number 1 in this Manifesto.

Not only the Polish Minister of Justice, the Undersecretary of State and our friend Thomasz of Subvenia Victima know how important the implementation is.

It showed during this conference that everybody in this room is fully aware of this responsibility.

Hans Nilsson of the Council of the European Union stated quite clearly:  
"Victims can rely on the provisions in the Directive. Failure to implement or not implementing correctly is not an option. Otherwise the Commission will take the Member State to Court."

Victim Support Europe as an organisation should watch the implementation process closely and advise if necessary. We, the member organisations, should do the same at the national level.

And hopefully this task will be made easier by creating a European body for the coordination and promotion of victim's rights.  
Which is item 7 of the Manifesto, by the way.

The member organisations of Victim Support Europe want to provide victims with high quality services delivered by well trained paid staff and volunteers.  
That's what I heard from many of you.

I came across a number of initiatives in the workshops.  
Jo Keaney mentioned the quality system Picasso that was implemented by Victim Support England & Wales. She also presented a very thorough process for the selection and training of volunteers. Equally thorough was the process the colleagues of Weisser Ring presented. They check your motivation as a volunteer, your criminal records are checked, your knowledge and skills to support victims are trained and checked. All this is done in the interest of victims.  
Quality is the key word.

Extended cooperation in cross-border cases is item 6 in our Manifesto.

From that point of view it was good to have Europol represented by deputy director Martinu. He drew our attention to the problems of trafficking of human beings and the sexual abuse of children. Interestingly the same subjects were mentioned in a discussion I had with Eurojust a few weeks ago. In the upcoming period, we have to take a closer look on these very serious forms of crime and see how Victim Support Europe can strengthen its cooperation with European organisations like Europol and Eurojust with the aim to give better support to the victims.

Finally.  
Did I miss relevant issues in these two days? Not really.  
Did I see issues that might benefit from more attention from Victim Support Europe?  
Of course.  
The issue is internet.

Victim Support in England & Wales is using online courses to train volunteers.  
I didn't hear examples from other member organisations. But maybe I just missed them.  
I did see however an interesting example from the USA.

Victim Support in Finland is quite active in delivering services online to victims.  
I didn't hear examples from other member organisations. But maybe I just missed them.

I think it's a challenge for Victim Support Europe and us, the member organisations to make better use of the internet to 'find' victims and to support them. And to intensify the communication and the exchange of information between us, the member organisations.

**Victor Jammers**