

Using Facility Dogs to Enable Victims to Access Safe Justice

2022

 Victim Support Europe





In October 2022, Victim Support Europe and its partners officially launched the European FYDO Network.

The network intends to bring together dogs, handlers and trainers, who agree with and work to FYDO's standards; to share best practices, to provide peer support, and to highlight the importance of quality standardised FYDO services across Europe.

The Network aims to consolidate the programme in partner countries and to encourage its use in other EU Member States, whilst developing advocacy tools to support embedding FYDO services within national victim support frameworks.

Interested in starting a FYDO program? Please contact



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2021, a consortium led by [Victim Support Europe](#) (VSE) came together to create a multi-national pilot project with the aim of providing support to vulnerable victims of crime in Belgium, France and Italy.

Building on the existing efforts by pioneers in the USA, and elsewhere in Europe, the project aimed to look into the ways dogs - trained by certified organisations and handled by victim support professionals - can be employed to mitigate the trauma suffered by victims of crime. The outcome was the [FYDO - an acronym for FacilitY Dog - project](#), whose mission was to improve how victims of crime viewed their overall experience by providing them with a FYDO dog, to support them on their journey to justice.

To accomplish its goals, VSE - the leader in policy development and advocacy on behalf of victims of crime in Europe - established a partnership which would develop a service that would be compatible with the diversity of European victim support systems.

The partnership consisted of: four **certified assistance dog organisations** ([Dog4Life](#) from Italy, [Hachiko](#) and [Canisha](#) from Belgium, [Handi'Chiens](#) from France) which developed a standardised, evidence-based, dog training programme; a **front-line victim support organisation** [VIADUQ - France Victims 67](#), a leader in the practical development of FYDO support, which already worked with a FYDO dog; and a **research institution** - the [University College of Cork](#), Ireland - which conducted the scientific research and data collection, and helped the partners draw conclusions from their innovative work. The US-based [Courthouse Dogs Foundation](#), which spearheaded the use of facility dogs to support victims, offered its decades-long experience in advocating for the deployment of dogs in victim support and joined the partnership as consultants.

The FacilitY Dog (FYDO) project's mission was not only to alleviate trauma suffered by victims seeking justice, but to improve the overall experience of their journey to justice by mitigating the impact of crime on victims, and on the judiciary, through understanding the needs of victims and using specially trained dogs to provide support on their journey to justice.

1 For more information about the FYDO Project and FYDO dogs, see: <https://victim-support.eu/what-we-do/our-projects/ongoing/prjct-fydo/>

To be able to achieve this mission, the project partners had to examine the way victims' needs could be met when dogs were used to enhance the support offered by their human counterparts, and to determine the benefits of such support, not only for the victim but for other actors involved in the process: law enforcement and court officials, etc.

Gaining an understanding of the empathy brought by the dogs and the comfort this gave traumatised victims, during stressful interviews and during court procedures, allowed the partners to better evaluate how interaction between the victim and authorities could be enhanced by this empathy and comfort. **The dogs helped to provide a safe environment for vulnerable victims to better communicate with officials and thus improved the victim's overall experience of the justice process.**

However, any success demonstrated by the use of dogs within official premises would be the result of long hours of hard work and adherence to **quality training standards**. Before any dog can begin to support traumatised victims, it will have undergone a **rigorous selection and training process overseen by accredited trainers**. The project partners determined that assuring quality training and associated training standards was paramount to the success of the project; **only members of Assistance Dogs International and their European counterparts, or applicants to these organisations, could have their trained dogs nominated as FYDO dogs.**

The stringent standards were also applied to the work of the dogs' professional handlers. **Dog handlers must all be professionals in the field of victim support** and must all undergo a similar selection and training process as the dogs. The team of dog and handlers must work as a unit to support victims either in a single location - such as a police station or shelter - or across multiple locations - thus accompanying the victim on their journey as needed - and therefore the bond between them must be the result of excellent training. The handlers not only have the welfare of the victim to consider but also the welfare of their dogs, who are their responsibility for as long as the dog works with them.

However, no matter how well trained the dog and handler and no matter how much victims and officials may benefit from the empathy and comfort given by the dogs - if their use is not acknowledged and formally included within systems designed to respond to both the needs of victims and the provision of support by professionals then it is to no avail. The project partners agreed that work on a **national framework, which accepts the need for FYDO dogs, should be the logical next step.**

The use of FYDO dogs comes at a cost: acquiring the best puppy, providing training for the dog and handlers, feeding and veterinary bills must be taken into consideration before an organisation commits to providing this type of victim support. Project partners came to the understanding that national systems must be developed to accommodate the use of FYDO dogs, not only to ensure that

the selection and training processes were standardised and accredited but also to ensure that funding could be built into victim support frameworks.

While the use of FYDO dogs in Europe is still in its very early stages, the project partners are already seeing increased interest in the acquisition and provision of dogs for victim support across France, Belgium and Italy. Their current goal is to be able to provide FYDO national coverage and to promote the use of cross-border FYDO dog services as required. Work is ongoing in establishing connections between trainers, victim support handlers and law enforcement and court officials and it is hoped that a European FYDO Network will be established in 2023.

INTRODUCTION

Falling victim to crime can be overwhelming; not only is the crime itself distressing, the aftermath can be just as awful. Victims may feel powerless and uncertain of what they are expected to do next; they may experience trauma, physical harm, shock or emotional upheaval, financial loss or general feeling of powerlessness. These reactions vary from person to person, and may last for days, weeks, months or even years².

All the while, victims are still expected to carry out tasks related to the crime, these may range from submitting an official report to the police, contacting insurance companies or their workplace, to undergoing medical examinations, hiring an attorney, arranging child-care, or even organising a loved one's funeral. Often, such already difficult tasks may be exacerbated by the way professionals, who they interact with, treat them.

To ensure that victims' needs are recognised and tended to, a comprehensive support system should be in place to guide victims on their journey from crime to recovery³. The first source of such support usually comes from within victims' personal networks - family, friends, colleagues. However, when victims' needs exceed those offered by primary caregivers, various victim support services may be available; such services are the result of historic grassroots' initiatives, scientific development, and increasing governmental awareness of how the consequences of crime affect citizens.

From their inception, victim support services have researched the use of innovative, evidence-based tools which reduce victims' suffering and speed their recovery. Thus, it should not come as a surprise that, in their quest to ensure assistance to the most vulnerable victims, **victim support professionals recognised the comfort dogs offer to humans in need.**

For millennia, humans have relied on dogs, not only as animal herders and guardians, but also as companions and providers of succour. More recently, the human-canine relationship has been more closely observed and analysed to better understand canine behaviour. At the same time, reliable, quality, standardised

2 National Framework for Comprehensive Victim Support, Victim Support Europe, 2022, https://victim-support.eu/wp-content/files_mf/1669047428NationalFrameworkforComprehensiveVictimSupport.pdf

3 For a full description of how a well-rounded national response to needs of victims should be set up, see National Framework for Comprehensive Victim Support, *supra* note.

programmes - with a focus on the training, use, and handling of working dogs - have advanced significantly. As a result of combining such programmes with our advanced knowledge of dog behaviours, highly trained work dogs not only provide search and rescue services, or assist their humans with disabilities, but now - in the form of facility dogs - also support traumatised victims on their road to recovery.

A FYDO Facility Dog, together with its qualified handlers, is trained by an member of Assistance Dog International (ADI) to work under challenging circumstances, with a victim of crime⁴. A FYDO dog supports the work of professionals - such as victim services' staff, psychologists, social workers, therapists, law enforcement personnel and prosecutors - and their communication with victims. The dog's presence encourages an anxious or traumatised person to talk about their distressing experience or the incident they witnessed.

The above noted increased interest in human-canine relationships has resulted in wide-ranging research, which has revealed that humans benefit from a dog's presence. When supported by a dog, humans demonstrate several positive outcomes, such as physical and psychological improvement following a trauma⁵. For example, a person's blood pressure may drop when they are in close proximity to a dog⁶; their stress levels recede and the heart rate slows down. Moreover, the presence of a dog can serve as an icebreaker and help people, who otherwise experience barriers to communication (e.g. children or persons with intellectual disabilities), to speak more freely, especially with the figures of authority.

Victims can often feel ashamed, or blame themselves or are blamed by others, for falling victim to a crime. In such situations, they report that **in the presence of a dog, they don't feel as if they are being judged, and therefore feel less ashamed or self-conscious when sharing their experiences with support professionals or law enforcement officers**. Being able to stroke a dog e.g. while giving testimony at a trial or during a therapy session (when it would not be appropriate to touch another person), can be cathartic, thus reducing stress and allowing a traumatised person to relax and accept assistance.

A combination of the above elements, and the inherent inclination of both humans and dogs to release oxytocin when they spend time together, demonstrates the **dogs' ability to support traumatised victims in their recovery, to reduce the**

4 For more information about the FYDO Project and FYDO dogs, see: <https://victim-support.eu/what-we-do/our-projects/ongoing/prjct-fydo/>

5 Courthouse Dogs Foundation Fact Sheet, The Courthouse Dogs Foundation, 2022, available online: <http://courhousedogs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Courthouse-Dogs-Foundation-Fact-Sheet-October-2022.pdf>

6 Molecular Biomarkers of Adult Human and Dog Stress during Canine-Assisted Interventions, J. Gardenberger, E. Flynn, E. Moratto, A. Wendt, K. Norris, 2022, available online: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8909518/>; Dogs in the criminal justice system: consideration of facility and therapy dogs, E. Spruin and K. Mozova, 2018, available online: <http://www.uco.es/ucopress/ojs/index.php/pet/article/view/10084>

incidence of PTSD and mitigate trauma⁷; thus enabling victims develop happier memories, as related to their experiences following a crime.

Victims can face a variety of barriers and challenges in accessing justice, from reporting the crime to playing an active role in the proceedings. Their voices are often unheard and their experience of the justice system may be far from a pleasant and frictionless journey. However, with a FYDO dog by their side, whether at a police station, in a court room or within victim support service premises, a victim feels more comfortable telling their story and feels safer in their surroundings.

As judges and law enforcement officers might have reservations about allowing a dog into a courtroom or a prosecutor's office to support a victim, this paper argues as to why this type of service might be essential for the most vulnerable of victims. It will demonstrate that strict quality standards for the training, placement and handling of the dog, and that a well-structured system of support and clearly defined expectations for both dogs and their humans can ensure the canine-human team carries out the tasks it is assigned to the advantage of the victim it supports.

This is not to suggest that FYDO dogs alone can improve victims' experience of the justice system; **the dogs are an additional support tool**, benefitting both victims of crime in their search for justice and the legal system in its quest to provide justice to them. However, this paper aims to highlight that change is required to allow the presence of facility dogs - within European criminal justice, and other appropriate, premises - to support vulnerable victims of crime.

7 Animal-Assisted Intervention for Trauma: a systematic literature review, M O'Haire, N. Guerin, A. Kirkham, 2015, available online: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4528099/>

THE STORY BEHIND FACILITY DOGS WORKING WITH VICTIMS OF CRIME IN THE EU

In 2003, the USA's Courthouse Dogs Foundation pioneered the concept of Courthouse Dogs or Justice Facility Dogs when, during competency and testimonial hearings at the King County Superior Court in Seattle, twin sisters were accompanied by Jeeter, a golden Labrador-Retriever volunteer service⁸. Today, some 300 dogs work across 40 American and Canadian states and provinces; facility dogs also support victims of crime as far afield as Australia⁹ and New Zealand¹⁰. All of these dogs have been acquired through a network of certified Assistance Dog International (ADI) members¹¹, who train and place the dogs where they can best support victims of crime.

In January 2018, Oliver became the first ADI-trained facility dog in Europe. Before then, Oliver had spent 18 months training with a US-based ADI member association; he graduated as a Justice Facility Dog and was sent to work in the United Kingdom. He has been trained to assist vulnerable witnesses and victims during stressful legal proceedings. When he is not working in the criminal justice system, Oliver resides in his office, located in the Psychology Department of Canterbury's Christ Church University, with his primary handler (Dr Elizabeth Spruin)¹².

⁸ Courthouse Dogs Foundation, History, Website: <https://courthousedogs.org/about-us/history/>

⁹ Justice Facility Dogs Australia, Website: <https://justicefacilitydogs.asn.au/>

¹⁰ Tauranga District Court dog Mabel wins second place in NZ Top Dog competition, Maryana Garcia, 19 October 2022, available online: <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/bay-of-plenty-times/news/tauranga-district-court-dog-mabel-wins-second-place-in-nz-top-dog-competition/5AOV74FGDBNLJXSV7V2YAWBCPM/>

¹¹ Assistance Dog International (ADI) is a worldwide coalition of not-for-profit programs that train and place Assistance Dogs. For more information, visit <https://assistedogsinternational.org/>

¹² Justice Support Dogs International Lab, Canterbury Christ Church University, website: <https://blogs.canterbury.ac.uk/psychology/justice-dogs/>



Oliver, the first Justice Facility Dog in Europe, at home in Canterbury, UK

In 2019, Handi'Chiens - a FYDO partner - placed the first EU-trained justice facility dog: Lol, who undertook his training following an initiative by Frederic Almendros, former prosecutor in Cahors, France. On 29 March 2019, while working with ALAVI, Frances Victimes 46, Lol came into contact with his first client, a child who had previously refused to enter the gendarmerie building where a hearing had been scheduled. During the 40 minutes of the hearing, Lol did not leave the victim's side; the child continuously caressed the dog while sharing its experience with the investigators¹³. Since that initial success, Lol has regularly offered his support to victims of crime during hearings in the Lot department¹⁴.

¹³ Un chien d'assistance judiciaire au service des victimes, France Victimes, available online : <https://www.france-victimes.fr/index.php/categories-inavem/105-actualites/857-un-chien-d-assistance-judiciaire-au-service-des-victimes>

¹⁴ Lol, le chien qui humanise la justice pénale, William-Alexandre Proust, Handi'Chiens, 14 March 2021, available online : <https://handichiens.org/lol-le-chien-qui-humanise-la-justice-penale/>



Lol in the European Parliament, taking part in the Annual Conference of Victim Support Europe with representatives of France Victimes, Handi'Chiens and Prosecutor office.

While Lol was working with his first clients, VSE was working with FYDO partners to develop a first EU transnational project that would train several dogs and place them in different working environments to support victims of crime, and that would conduct research to collect evidence, not only on how facility dogs interact with victims, but also how they affect their human colleagues.

Since 2018, the number of facility dogs working on mainland Europe has grown; among our partner countries there are currently 10 FYDO dogs working in France, 3 in Italy, and 2 in Belgium. Below, the paper will discuss reasons for increasing victims' access to this service.

1. WHY MIGHT FYDO DOGS BE NEEDED IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM?¹⁵

Crime is an inevitable and unfortunate part of life, and its impact cannot be underestimated. The European Commission estimates that 15% of Europeans, or 75 million people across the EU, fall victim to serious crime each year. Yet only a fraction of these victims submit a report to the police, and even fewer victims have 'their day at court' and express satisfaction with criminal proceedings, if they are ever instigated¹⁶.

1.1 IMPACT OF CRIME ON VICTIMS AND SOCIETY

To better understand the challenges that prevent victims from reporting a crime, it must be acknowledged that they can be emotionally, physically, financially, psychologically, and socially affected by crime. These after-effects may act as

15 This chapter is largely based on VSE's Discussion Paper: Safe Justice for Victims of Crime - Challenging How We Perceive Success In Justice: Moving towards an integrated, victim-sensitive system, which lays down in more detail the fundamental elements for safe justice for all victims. Please refer to the online Discussion Paper for more details; Victim Support Europe, February 2023: https://victim-support.eu/wp-content/files_mf/1677284356SafeJusticeforvictimsofCrime_compressed1.pdf

16 It is very difficult to estimate how many victims experience 'justice' through criminal proceedings. Firstly - it is not possible to know the size of unreported crime, and estimates are rarely based on broad surveys which might give a good picture in this regard. Additionally, it is very difficult to get access to statistics regarding the percentage of successful criminal complaints that lead to prosecutions, that lead to convictions, that then potentially lead to a victims' sense of justice. According to a recent survey of court users in Belgium, in the preceding decade, up to 8% of respondents appeared before criminal courts as a victim - which allocated per year is less than 1% annually, which is in stark contrast with the estimated 15% of victims each year. See e.g. RTBF, Six citoyens sur dix satisfaits de la Justice belge, 25 February 2015, available at: <https://www.rtbf.be/article/six-citoyens-sur-dix-satisfaits-de-la-justice-belge-8916081>

barriers to recovery or to a fulfilling life, and may directly affect a victim's ability to access justice¹⁷.

Crime affects not only direct victims – those who have experienced the crime – but also their families and friends, as well as witnesses, first responders, local communities, and ultimately society as a whole¹⁸. It leaves in its wake psychological traumas, secondary victimisation, financial burdens, lifestyle changes, legal costs, and burdensome (and often painful) tasks linked to any criminal proceedings.

European States have increasingly incorporated the victim's perspective when establishing wide-ranging victims' rights, services, and obligations, driven – in the most part – by directives from international bodies such as the UN, the Council of Europe, and the European Union. Since 1985, a series of international norms have been adopted across the EU, starting with the UN Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power¹⁹ and including, more recently, the Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec (2006)8²⁰ on assistance to crime victims and the 2012 EU Victims' Rights Directive²¹ (the latter two both due for revision in 2023).

Yet, the implementation of these norms has been piecemeal: many criminal justice systems are still under-developed in terms of giving victims a voice, reducing the harm they encounter, and maximising their positive experience and the outcomes of proceedings.

Success in justice cannot be claimed while vast numbers of victims choose not to report even the most serious of crimes; even when they submit a report – victims feel they are not heard, or that they do not have a voice. A system which treats victims disrespectfully, which further harms or fails to protect them, and leaves them dissatisfied by their experience, cannot be considered successful no matter how efficient it is, nor what the final verdict is. Equally, a justice system that causes vicarious trauma to its actors, in particular witnesses and members of the jury, should not be considered a success story²².

17 Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (2005). The Impact of Victimization. <https://www.crcvc.ca/docs/victimization.pdf>

18 The Annex to the EU Handbook on Victims of Terrorism provides more information about the circles of impact in the context of victims of terrorism. EU Centre of Expertise for Victims of Terrorism (2021). Annex to the EU Handbook on Victims of Terrorism, available online: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/law/annex_to_eu_handbook_on_victims_of_terrorism_2021_01_15_en.pdf

19 UN General Assembly, Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power, resolution adopted by the General Assembly, 29 November 1985, A/RES/40/34, available online: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f2275b.html>

20 Council of Europe Recommendation Rec(2006)8 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on assistance to crime victims, Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 14 June 2006 at the 967th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies, available online: <https://rm.coe.int/16804dcca>

21 Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA, OJ L 315, 14.11.2012, p. 57-73, available online: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32012L0029>

22 For example, a juror in the R. Kelly federal trial on charges of child pornography in Chicago, USA, had to be replaced after suffering a panic attack following the description of the crimes that Mr. Kelly committed against children. See: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/juror-excused-r-kelly-child-sex-abuse-trial-panic-attack-closing-argum-rcna47306>

All the while, the basic understanding of the objectives of justice - grounded in action against the perpetrator for the benefit of society - appears to be so limiting that it is seen as a fundamental barrier to transforming behaviours, rules, and the infrastructure of justice systems to meet victims' rights.

Barriers experienced by victims when accessing justice are even greater for the vulnerable. For example, children, depending on their age, are unaware of what constitutes a crime or how to seek protection, or that parental consent might be required²³. Persons with disabilities are much more likely to become a victim, and much less likely to report the crime²⁴; migrants, especially those whose status is unclear, may be more hesitant to report crimes than the rest of the population from fear of prosecution or removal²⁵. Other minority groups - LGBTQ+, sex workers, Roma or travellers etc. - will have their own reasons for not reporting a crime or not collaborating with its investigation.

However, there is a range of solutions that can, and should, be put into place: to facilitate communication with victims, to increase their confidence in the system, and to support them through what may be a highly stressful and often re-traumatising experience, while they pursue criminal justice and recover from the effects of crime.

While the use of FYDO dogs is known to promote a sense of well-being and to provide victims with comfort in times of stress, it must be acknowledged that their use will not overcome all the barriers confronting victims. However, encouraging national authorities to support victims' rights by considering the introduction of dogs and their handlers into all public areas where victims are most likely to report a crime could help to decrease some instances of psychological harm or repeat victimisation. The potential of further harm could be addressed by providing victims with the support of FYDO dogs throughout their journey to justice - from the police station to the courtroom.

In France, victim support services can be requested by the prosecutor to support a victim during criminal proceedings. The prosecutor therefore allows and agrees to the FYDO dog being present wherever the victims need the dog's support. This has proved to be effective in ensuring that dogs are accepted in French courtrooms, police stations or other spaces where victims may be located.

Raising public awareness of victims' issues and how they could be mitigated - by promoting the use of FYDO dogs, among other tools - may encourage both the reporting of crime and the victim's experience while they are on the road to both justice and recovery.

23 See e.g. National human rights institutions (NHRIs) Series: Tools to support child-friendly practices. Child-Friendly Complaint Mechanisms, UNICEF, 2019 available at: https://www.unicef.org/eca/sites/unicef.org/eca/files/2019-02/NHRI_ComplaintMechanisms.pdf

24 See e.g. US Department of Justice, Crime Against Persons with Disabilities, 2009-2019 - Statistical Tables, available at: <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/crime-against-persons-disabilities-2009-2019-statistical-tables>

25 See e.g. PICUM, What Justice for Undocumented Migrants, 2021, available at: <https://picum.org/what-justice-for-undocumented-migrants/>

Further information on the use of FYDO dogs within the justice system can be found below in Chapter 2.

1.2 NEEDS OF VICTIMS FOLLOWING A CRIME

After a crime occurs, victims may experience various needs, which result from the harm caused by and the impact of a crime, in addition to other interrelated factors, such as an individual victim's circumstances. Those needs can be broadly grouped into five main categories.

The first, and most essential need, is **recognition and respect**. It is widely agreed that those harmed by crime need to be recognised as victims and that their suffering needs to be acknowledged. Additionally, victims need to be treated with dignity and respect during their interaction with police officers, investigating authorities, legal professionals, judicial staff and others involved in the judicial process.

Support, including the provision of information, is fundamental to the recovery of victims and their understanding of what to expect, in the short- and longer term. Victims often require help from several stakeholders. Their assistance may take the form of emotional, psychological, financial, legal or practical support; however, the sooner assistance is made available the more it helps victims avoid larger (and possibly more expensive) issues. Victims may need the support over a long period (depending on the severity of the crime) and it may include training for new jobs or moving home (particularly relevant to victims of human trafficking or gender-based violence).

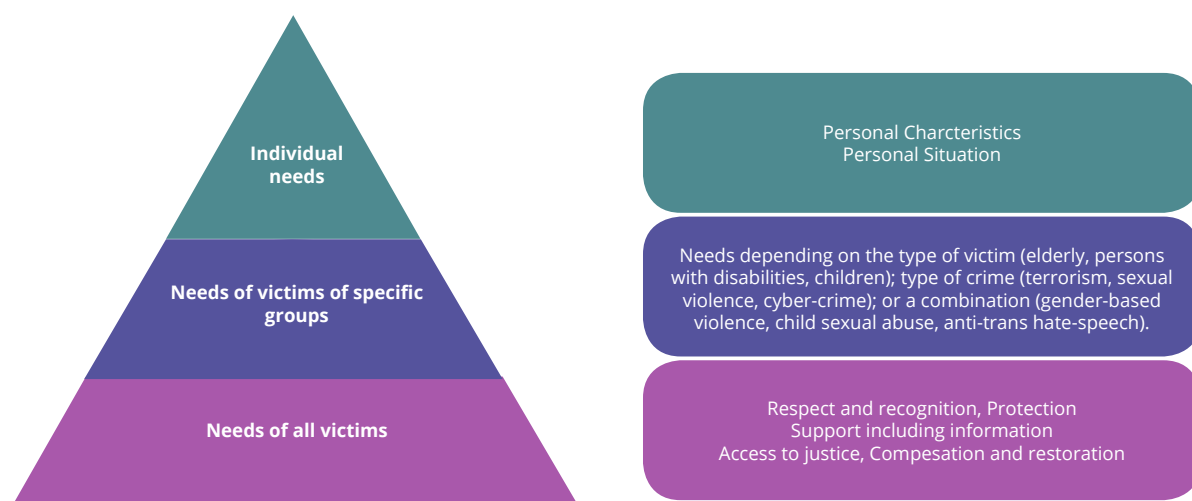
Victims also have a range of **protection** needs; in terms of protection from both physical and further emotional harm, including secondary victimisation, such as "victim-blaming" or insensitivity, brought about by the behaviours and attitudes of stakeholders. To avoid harm caused by, for instance, repeated insensitive interviews or from confronting the offender in court, victims must be ensured protection throughout the criminal investigations and court proceedings.

The victim's need for **access to justice** can be summarised as needing to see justice done and being confident about how this is achieved. Access to justice includes the accessibility of court processes, the availability of adequate legal representation in criminal trials, access to informal legal processes (such as penal mediation), and the right to review the decision as to whether to prosecute the offender, etc.

Finally, victims of crime have wide ranging needs for **compensation and restoration**, which address financial harms as well as the need for wider social recognition. Significantly, international and EU legislation and guidelines clearly state that victims of violent crime should receive financial compensation and restoration. In addition to financial compensation from the offender or the state, financial restitution may be achieved using a range of measures and may integrate redress by means of, for example, restorative justice processes.

While this broad set of needs are common to all types of crime victims, specific victim groups can have their own distinct needs, based on a shared characteristic or experience. For instance, the needs of victims of terrorism, injured by attacks that were intended to harm society, may need special consideration, support and protection due to the nature of the crime committed against them²⁶. Furthermore, each individual victim's needs will depend on their own personal characteristics, which can include their age, sex, previous victimisation or stressful life events; (mental) health; social networks; socio-economic situation; cross border situation; and daily stressors. These needs will evolve over time and responding to the needs of victims of crime therefore requires an individualised victim-sensitive approach.

A basic way of visualising the needs of victims is through a pyramid which illustrates how victims' needs are generally recognised. This allows for the provision of services based on the needs of different groups of victims, which should include assessing each individual victim's needs and developing a personalised tailor-made response to each victim.



The pyramid of victims' needs (VSE)

It can be seen from the above description of victims' needs that while they fall under five main topic areas, needs are individual to each victim. **The use of FYDO dogs can address some of these needs inasmuch as the dogs may provide victims with support during their journey to justice.** For example, research has shown that the presence of a trained dog positively impacts a victim's confidence and ability to communicate, which can result in the provision of better evidence²⁷, thus meeting both the victim's need for support and their need to access justice.

²⁶ EU Centre of Expertise for Victim of Terrorism (2021). *EU Handbook on Victims of Terrorism*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/criminal-justice/protecting-victims-rights/eu-centre-expertise-victims-terrorism_en

²⁷ Victim Support Europe & APAV (2019). *VOCIARE Synthesis Report: Victims of Crime Implementation Analysis of Rights in Europe*, 102.

“The dog helped me to express myself more clearly ... his presence allowed me not to be intimidated, I hardly ever looked for my words, the words came by themselves in fact ... I noticed that I cry less when she is present.”

Victim of domestic violence

1.3 IMPACT OF CRIME ON JUSTICE PROFESSIONALS

As mentioned previously, while crime directly affects those who personally experience its immediate effects, many others - witnesses, first responders and professionals who work with traumatised individuals - may also experience adverse effects due to their exposure to crime victimisation. This is particularly relevant for first responders - the police, emergency medical staff, firefighters and others - **who often suffer physical and psychological traumas, because of a high level of exposure to other people's suffering.** Public health and public safety workers experience a broad range of physical and mental health issues as a result of work-related exposure to natural or other disasters. It is estimated that 30% of first responders develop behavioural health conditions including, but not limited to, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as compared with 20% in the general population.²⁸

Similarly, psychological distress is inherent to the work of the judicial system; where vicarious trauma and stress are natural by-products²⁹. A recent well-being survey among members of the judiciary indicated that judges and magistrates are at an increased risk of “burnout and trauma from having to constantly deal with high workloads and the harrowing details of serious crimes”³⁰.

Vicarious trauma has been defined as the cumulative psychological effect of bearing witness to abuse, violence and trauma in the lives of people we care about, are open to and are committed to helping³¹.

While the well-being of professionals who work with victims is not a primary objective of FYDO deployment, **a dog's presence will inevitably improve the experiences**

28 Benedek et al., 2007 and Abbot et al 2015, as per SAMHSA, Disaster Technical Assistance Center, Supplemental Research Bulletin, *First Responders: Behavioral Health*, 2018, available at: <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/dtac/supplementalresearchbulletin-firstresponders-may2018.pdf>

29 United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, *Vicarious trauma experienced by judges and the importance of healing*, available at: <https://www.unodc.org/dohadeclaration/en/news/2021/26/vicarious-trauma-experienced-by-judges-and-the-importance-of-healing.html>

30 The University of Melbourne, Pursuit, *Wellbeing Survey of Australia's Judiciary Reveals Risk of Distress and Burnout*, 2019, available at: <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/wellbeing-survey-of-australia-s-judiciary-reveals-risk-of-distress-and-burnout>. Full results of the survey can be consulted in Schrever C., Hulbert C., Souldrin T., *The Psychological Impact of Judicial work: Australia's First Empirical Research Measuring Judicial Stress and Well-being*, 2019, available at: <https://www.judicialcollege.vic.edu.au/resources/psychological-impact-judicial-work-australias-first-empirical-research-measuring-judicial>

31 Office of Victims of Crimes, *What is Vicarious Trauma?*, available at: <https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/vtt/what-is-vicarious-trauma>

of most of those involved with it. In this way, FYDO dogs can reduce the incidence of vicarious trauma for those professionals, while they support those victims most needing their valuable support.

“Often, colleagues will come into my office and ask to spend some time with the dog after they have had a particularly hard day at work.”

FYDO handler, Belgian police

By better understanding how justice systems operate and what victims’ needs are, while they navigate their recovery, we can now move forward to create a comprehensive FYDO support system for those victims would benefit from such support.

2. USING FYDO DOGS TO ACHIEVE SAFE JUSTICE

Introducing dogs into the justice system may be an extravagant idea; yet dogs have been accepted as team members throughout history. This paper argues that a professionally trained dog, handled by qualified victim support professionals, can greatly contribute to improving both the victim's experience and the judicial outcomes, whilst ensuring an environment for safe justice.

The use of dogs within different work environments has become commonplace; in particular, they are successfully employed by the police, and other law enforcement agencies, as well as by first responders to help with search and rescue, to find illicit substances/materials, to support persons with disabilities and, more recently, to detect Covid-19³² and cancer³³. While dogs have been accepted into numerous workplaces and have become integrated colleagues, many organisations, including the judiciary, are hesitant about accepting the presence of a dog in official premises³⁴. However, licenced fully trained dogs are now available to provide support to a person attending courtroom proceedings.

2.1 ASSURING QUALITY DOG TRAINING

There are a number of different types of assistance dogs, that is dogs which are trained to support people with disabilities and recognised medical conditions: a guide dog provides mobility for a person with sight issues, a hearing dog alerts its handler to sounds, a service dog enables a person with disabilities.

A FYDO dog is classed as an assistance dog, it works alongside its professional human to support victims of crime on their journey to justice and recovery. The dog

32 CDC Foundation, A New Tool in the Toolkit: Dogs Help to Detect COVID-19, available at: <https://www.cdcfoundation.org/stories/project-uses-dogs-detect-covid-19>

33 Medical News Today, Can dogs detect cancer?, 2018, available at: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/323620#overview>

34 In recent reporting from Romanian NGOs, a blind man who was summoned to appear at a Bucharest court was not allowed to bring his guide dog into the court building. Allegedly the court clerks insisted that the dog stay at the entrance, while they accompanied the man to the hearing room.

and handler act as facilitators, helping a vulnerable victim navigate the aftermath of a crime with as little additional trauma and secondary victimisation as possible³⁵.

Since a FYDO dog will be required to work with traumatised victims of crime and to accompany its human protégé to a variety of locations, **it is important that any dog used in such work is highly reliable in all situations**. Some may argue that almost any dog can be trained to complete a certain set of actions or taught to behave in a certain way. Yet, the only dogs that should be allowed to work with vulnerable persons, in various error-free high-stress situations and environments, should be those that have graduated from a high level training programme and that are handled by professionals who have been trained to work with victims of crime.

There are several ways to ensure that a dog will be well trained before working with victims and that its handler receives appropriate training. As neither members of the judiciary nor other law enforcement or court professionals should be expected to assure the quality of a dog's training, the external standardisation and certification of the training programme will be paramount and must reassure all concerned that the programme reaches and maintains a high standard of quality, before access is given to a FYDO dog.

Certification for working dogs is often a matter of national policy or even legislation that regulates access to (working) dogs to certain environments. The police, for example, may have their own dog training units and source their working dogs internally; elsewhere, dog training programmes exist to deploy working dogs to a variety of environments, including for work with vulnerable populations, such as victims.

To ensure a dog is able to perform all the tasks associated with FYDO services, in addition to their internal or national training certification requirements, **Victim Support Europe and its partners have relied on the standards created by Assistance Dogs International (ADI)³⁶ as well as those of Assistance Dogs Europe (ADEU), as the gold standard for global dog training**. To ensure any expansion of FYDO services, dogs supporting victims of crimes must have received training from an ADI, or prospective ADI member.

FYDO dog requirements:

- Dog must be sourced from ethical breeders
- Dog must start training between 8 and 12 weeks of age
- Training must be given by ADI or ADEU (candidate)
- Dog must be specifically selected to work as a FYDO dog

³⁵ In some systems, a facility dog is the dog assigned to a specific physical facility - a care home, hospital or a Barnahus. However, in the context of FYDO - facility refers to the action of facilitation, rather than to the physical environment in which a certain institution is housed.

³⁶ <https://assistancedogsinternational.org/>

- Training must take between 18 and 24 months
- Training must be carried out in line with FYDO dog standards
- Dog must be handled by a professional handler who has been trained to work with victims
- Dog must either be placed to support victims at a single location (e.g. police station or a victim support service premises) or must be able to support victims throughout their journey

Case study: ADI – the leading authority in the Assistance Dog industry

ADI has accredited member associations across the world. To become an ADI member, and to keep its accreditation, ADI members have to meet a significant number of criteria. Accredited programs undergo an on-site evaluation by trained assessors, who spend several days interviewing staff, clients, volunteers, and applicants, in addition to reviewing paperwork and files to make sure that all of ADI's standards are being met. ADI Standards are the basis for ADI's peer-review accreditation survey process. This comprehensive process evaluates the quality of assistance dog programmes, and determines whether a programme meets all the requirements of these standards³⁷. Once a programme's accreditation has been approved, it must be reviewed every five years.

An accredited ADI member typically trains dogs to perform specific tasks, in different environments, with a variety of people who can benefit from their presence. According to current ADI methodology, assistance dogs between 2 to 18 months old are placed with a volunteer foster family, selected on the basis of their skills and family life, and professional and domestic environment, to provide 'pre-education' training. The dogs then undergo specialist instruction from professional assistance dog trainers; this is when a dog matures into its adult personality, allowing its trainers to determine its skills and the work to which the dog will be best suited, and enjoy.

At around 24 months of age, the facility dog is ready to be teamed with its handler. The new team then receive extensive training from the assistance dog organisation to ensure that they will establish a successful long-term partnership. From this point, the assistance dog organisation maintains oversight of the team's work relationship.

³⁷ The ADI Standards are continually evaluated to ensure they are up-to-date with current industry practices and remain focused on continuous improvement of the assistance dog industry. Summary of ADI standards: <https://assistedogsinternational.org/clientuploads/Summary%20of%20Standards/2022-ADI-Summary-of-Standards.pdf>

All dogs in an ADI programme undergo some common training elements. Following this, FYDO dogs are specifically selected from the pool of graduate dogs and then trained to support victims. FYDO dogs should not be confused with therapy or emotional support dogs, they are assistance dogs that have been trained by recognised and certified organisations. Therapy dogs are personal pets that have typically undergone basic obedience training with their owner and have then been evaluated and registered/certified by a local or national therapy dog organisation as a therapy dog team.

“At one of our courts, dog support for victims was being piloted. Dog training was not certified and handlers were just volunteers who thought the dog’s presence might be beneficiary for the victim. On the day of the trial, a victim came and the volunteer came with the small dog and put it in the victim’s lap. The victim not at all prepared and was surprised by this, and went on to explain that they were allergic to dogs! After this, the practice was discontinued.”

Judge from Hungary

Major differences between these pet dogs and their owners and a FYDO dog team are their lack of rigorous specialised training, and the limited assistance they can give in assisting vulnerable and traumatised people who are involved in stressful legal proceedings.

Differences between facility dogs and therapy dogs³⁸

FYDO dog	Therapy dog
Trained for two years by an ADI organisation	No standardised training/testing
Trained to lie still Trained to be resilient to stressful environments	Not trained to work in an emotionally charged environment
Must be easy going, have a calm and stable temperament and exceptional obedience	No temperament standards or verification of behaviour
Selected specifically for FYDO dog roles based on temperament	Not selected for role, but brought into work based on the motivation of its handler
Can work for hours at a time, dogs have a high degree of resiliency and handlers are trained to recognise dog stress and manage it accordingly	Work duration can be as short as 15 minutes
Handler is a criminal justice system professional with trauma informed practice training	No handler training requirements, can be a volunteer

³⁸ Justice Facility Dogs Canada, website: <https://justicefacilitydogs.ca/>

2.2 DOGS WITH VICTIM SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL HANDLERS

FYDO dogs can be used in a range of settings. Their work-place will be determined by national victim support services and criminal justice systems, based on victims' needs and the interests of stakeholders working with victims. Places where victims of crime can receive support, and where a FYDO dog can encourage victims to communicate information and tell their story, where the victims feel safe and protected from stress.

FYDO dogs may be placed with victim support associations, specialist victim support units within police stations, prosecutors' offices, sexual assault centers, Barnahus³⁹, etc. In any of these work locations, FYDO dogs may support victims during police and prosecution interviews⁴⁰, at court hearings⁴¹, during hospital examinations, during visits to⁴² or stays in specialised victim support services⁴³.

The FYDO handler should always be a victim support professional, trained in trauma-informed victim-centric practices. Depending on individual situations - other persons can be present - a police officer, judge or a victim's family member, for example. The dog's role is to facilitate the victim's journey through recovery, and they should be allowed access to any environment where this journey takes them, whether this is during a therapy session, a court trial, or a police interview.

As noted above, FYDO dogs may be trained to work with generic victim support services (helping victims of all crimes), or to work with specialist services, assisting specific victim groups (at shelters for victims of intimate partner or gender-based violence, Barnahus, etc). The dogs may offer reassurance to groups of victims who are all part of a same event (e.g. a trial involving multiple victims) or on a one-to-one basis; the level of support and its delivery will differ depending on each individual situation, while support may be required long-term or as a one-off event.

Depending on how the national victim support framework has been established, **FYDO dogs may be based in a single location, or required to accompany victims to multiple destinations.** No matter where the dog carries out its tasks, an **individual needs assessment should be carried out to determine whether such support will benefit the victim and to determine how that support should be delivered.**

The individual assessment will determine whether the person is vulnerable, whether and how the crime has affected them, whether they have difficulties in expressing their feelings or telling their story, etc. Following this needs assessment, the support

39 The Barnahus model refers to multidisciplinary and interagency interventions organised in a child-friendly setting. For more information, visit: <https://www.barnahus.eu/en/>

40 Onze nieuwe collega, de emotionele zorghond Fluf, 21 October 2021, <https://www.politie.be/5415/nieuws/onz-nieuwe-collega-de-emotionele-zorghond-fluf>

41 Accident de Millas : deux labradors vont assister les victimes lors du procès, 12 September 2022, <https://www.francebleu.fr/infos/faits-divers-justice/drame-de-millas-deux-labradors-vont-assister-les-victimes-lors-du-proces-1663002409>

42 Orphée, une chienne dressée pour apaiser les victimes, 19 October 2021, <https://www.dna.fr/faits-divers-justice/2021/10/19/orphee-dresse-pour-apaiser-les-victimes>

43 Dog4Life website: <https://www.dog4life.it/gli-altri-progetti/facility-dog/>

worker will determine how working with the FYDO dog will help the victim. Each service will have its own protocols and team discussions will decide how the dog should be used and on how best to arrange a meeting with the victim.

If FYDO support may be needed over the longer term, both the dog and its handler can accompany the victim throughout the criminal proceedings. For example, after receiving support from both a psychologist and a FYDO dog when attending counselling sessions at a victim support office, a victim can ask to be accompanied by the dog when providing their testimony before an investigative judge and during a trial hearing.

In Strasbourg, the local victim support association worked with over 30 civil parties, and many young girls, in the trial against a former teacher who was accused of sexual assault and rape. The civil parties, in particular the children and their families, benefited from the presence of Orphée, a FYDO dog, in this stressful environment. A specific room in the courthouse was dedicated to the use of civil parties and victims to allow them take a break from the hearing, pet the dog and relax. Young victims were able to give their testimonies or statements with Orphée by their side⁴⁴.

It should be noted some FYDO dogs, which are located at specific locations such as police stations, are unable to provide such long term support, even though they may have established a rapport with a victim, as their function is to offer immediate on-site support.

FYDO dogs may be also trained to work in crisis response situations - in mass-victimisation events such as a terrorist attack, they may be required to work at victim reception centers, in airports or train stations, or at other public places, etc.

Dogs are not tools. They are living breathing beings that need time to get to know the person they are expected to comfort. Building a relationship between a victim and the FYDO dog is very important and must be planned in advance.

To prepare a FYDO dog to work with a victim, whether as a one-off event or over a longer period, an introductory meeting - which includes the FYDO handler - will help establish a bond between the dog and the victim prior to any support work being carried out. During this encounter, the victim is encouraged to walk, play, and interact with the dog, allowing both human and dog to learn to trust each other.

Across Europe there are several different approaches to FYDO dog placement. In France, victim support services provide FYDO dogs to support victims in a range of locations; while in Belgium, FYDO dogs are currently placed within specific victim support groups to work in police stations and in one young people's institution. In Italy, FYDO dogs are trained to support and accompany women and children who are victims of domestic violence.

⁴⁴ Les fillettes abusées face au professeur Karcher, Antoine Bonin, DNA, 6 Octobre 2022, available at : <https://www.dna.fr/faits-divers-justice/2022/10/06/les-fillettes-abusees-face-au-professeur-karcher>

2.3 FYDO DOGS SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF CRIME IN JUSTICE SYSTEM

Whilst almost any victim may benefit from the presence of a FYDO dog, this service is primarily available to victims who have completed an individual support needs assessment. While FYDO support may be recommended for all victims suffering from the effects of a crime, experience shows that FYDO dogs work most effectively with victims with disabilities and victims of sexual and intimate partner violence⁴⁵. Dogs may be used to support not only adults but also child victims, depending on the child's age and personal development, as well as adults.

By providing a sense of comfort and security in what is often a stressful, and sometimes traumatic, environment, FYDO dogs enable victims to communicate their feelings and retell their story; the presence of the dogs makes it easier for the victims to express themselves and provide details of their experiences. In this sense, FYDO dogs benefit the justice system as they encourage victims to testify in court.

Testimonials from victims and their families confirm the benefits of using FYDO dogs:

"Maybe she (the dog) feels our pain, so she just gets closer to us and it feels good. Above all I have the impression that when she puts herself against me, quite simply, it is that she wants to reassure me, I think that she understands my pain a little, she sees and feels it. But when she's a little bit further away, I think she wants to let me in my space, I think she felt that way."

Victim of domestic violence

"Fluf (the dog) came to visit and I loved getting to know him. He's nice and good. I used to have dogs too and it was nice to cuddle and pet a dog because that was a long time ago."

Victim of burglary

"I feel pretty good ... I felt at peace ... I feel confident and the dog is there ... he allowed me to remain serene."

Victim of sexual abuse

⁴⁵ The Use of Facility Dogs to Bridge the Justice Gap for Survivors of Sexual Offending, E. Spruin, K. Mozov, T. Dempster and R. Freeman, 5 June 2020, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342041937_The_Use_of_Facility_Dogs_to_Bridge_the_Justice_Gap_for_Survivors_of_Sexual_Offending

"Sometimes she (the dog) lies down against my legs, sometimes we give a kibble to put her back in the game. Sometimes she gets on her back while opening her jaw, it looks like she's laughing, it's really funny, it's such beautiful moments to live, I've never encountered such moments before and I've seen that I've earned her trust and I thought to myself that she understands and gets me in her own way."

Victim of domestic violence

"By explaining to me well what to use the dog for during these sessions, and this greatly contributed to the desire to go to the session with the psychologist for my daughter ... it calms the situation and the anxiety. I feel comfortable in her presence and I see that it brings joy to my daughter even if she has to remember the painful facts that she would have felt in her life."

Mother of sexual abuse victim

An investigative judge suggested that the support provided by a FYDO dog demonstrated the importance of the dog's presence, both for the victim and the judge:

"I heard the young XXX and her mother yesterday in my office. I wanted to let you know that the quality of your support has been greatly emphasized by Mrs. YYY (mother of XXX).

Yesterday, XXX was accompanied by Orphée (FYDO Dog). It is difficult to say how the audition would have gone without the dog, but the audition - however difficult - went very well, and XXX been able to verbalize that the accompaniment of Orphée "allowed her not to break down". Moreover, my clerk and I were able to see that when the hardest facts were addressed, XXX made some petting to the dog, then she was able to refocus on the answers to my questions. The climate was serene, and the entry into cabinet appeared much less difficult, because it became centered on Orphée.

I wanted to share with you the satisfaction of these victims, and thank you for your support."

"The dog inside the shelter establishes a relationship of trust, fidelity, affection and tranquility which are essential elements for the victims."

Operator of a Center Antiviolence

“The dog was able to help the victim relax and reassure him. I think that the dog also made it possible to make the link with me because the victim was very afraid of meeting a psychologist.”

Psychologist in a victim support service

3. NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR FYDO SUPPORT

To ensure the success of a national framework on FYDO support, it is not enough that services are established on an ad hoc basis. Mechanisms must be put in place to coordinate the smooth implementation of a system that responds both to the needs of victims and to the ability of victim support professionals to create a suitable environment for the victims and the dogs.

3.1 NATIONAL COORDINATION AND LEADERSHIP FOR FYDO SUPPORT

VSE's National Victim Support Framework refers to the work carried out by FYDO dogs. The framework suggests that FYDO dog should be placed within specialist and generic victim support and criminal justice services, located in police stations, courtrooms, hospital or sexual assault centers, etc. To ensure a systemic approach, all actors in contact with victims must understand the importance, and the benefits, FYDO dogs bring to victim support and accept their presence in the workplace.

Careful coordination is required to ensure that those victims of crime who need FYDO support can fully benefit from it. The framework should be set up to ensure:

- All professionals working with victims – including police officers, judges, attorneys or administrative staff working on insurance and compensation claims, etc. – are aware of the FYDO service and are educated on its benefits as well as on how to act around a FYDO dog.
- Dogs are guaranteed access to support victims throughout their journey; by enabling entry to specific areas (the police station, courtroom or therapy room) and by making reasonable procedural adjustments to accommodate victims' needs.

At the national level, the ministry in charge of victims' issues can lead the deployment of FYDO dogs across the country. Experience indicates that when a memorandum of understanding, convention or other contract is signed between the FYDO handling organisation (such as a victim support service) and the prosecutor or a local courtroom, the presence of the FYDO dog is more readily accepted as part of the victim support process.

Case study – FYDO dogs in France

France Victimes, the French national federation of 130 local victim support associations, operates across France (including its overseas territories). Handi'Chiens, an ADI member, is a French dog training association that has trained more than 3,000 dogs since its foundation in 1989.

Once Lol, the first justice facility dog, completed his training in 2019, he was placed with the local firefighters in Cahors; he worked with France Victimes 46, the local victim support association.

In January 2021, Orphée became the first FYDO dog to be placed within a French victim support association. Orphée works with the director, her main handler, of France Victimes 67 - Viaduc. This means that Orphée not only works with the director but also lives as part of her family.

Her handler and other colleagues, who work with Orphée when meeting with victims, have all received training from Handi'Chiens on working with a FYDO dog: from how to recognise signs of stress to the commands needed for her to interact with victims. Team planning discussions – following the assessment of a victim's needs – with the psychologist or the association's lawyer are used to schedule meetings between Orphée and victims.

Following Orphée's successful placement, 8 more FYDO dogs were trained by Handi'Chiens and placed across several French regions in 2021 and 2022: Ouchi in France Victimes 58 (Nevers)⁴⁶, Orko in the forensic unit for minors at

⁴⁶ Nevers : un chien recruté par le tribunal pour faciliter la libération de la parole des victimes, M. F. avec Rémy Chidaine, 14 February 2021, available at : <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/bourgogne->

Orléans' regional hospital⁴⁷, Ravel in the forensic unit for minors at Saint-Lô hospital⁴⁸, Rancho is with the firefighters in Nîmes⁴⁹, Roucky in France Victimes 49 (Angers)⁵⁰, Rumba with the Gendarmerie in Vannes⁵¹, Suki in AVL Loiret⁵², and Ragnar works with the national police in their Béziers' station⁵³. Another 10 FYDO dogs are expected to be placed by Handi'chiens and France victimes in 2023.

This innovative practice has been met with enthusiasm across all sectors - Orphee and her canine colleagues have been recognised as valuable victim support team members across France. So much so that in December 2022, accompanied by Charlotte Caubel, the French Secretary of State for Children, and Brigitte Macron, the First Lady of France, Eric Dupond-Moretti, the French Minister of Justice, announced that he wanted to "normalise", and find funding for, the use of facility dogs within organisations that would benefit from their presence⁵⁴. "The goal is to have "one dog per region," explained the Minister of Justice.

In February 2023, the French Ministry of Justice signed an agreement with the national assistance dog school, France Victimes and the Animal Protection Society (SPA) to ensure that a FYDO dog will be available in each jurisdiction⁵⁵; 20 additional dogs per year will be made available to voluntary courts⁵⁶. Local agreements are already being planned between the different entities: heads

franche-comte/nievre/nevers/video-nevers-un-chien-d-assistance-judiciaire-s-installe-au-tribunal-pour-reconforter-les-victimes-1955632.html

- 47 Loiret : des chiens d'assistance judiciaire pour soutenir les enfants victimes d'infractions pénales, Lucie Claussin, 17 June 2021, available at : <https://www.forum.fr/news/loiret-des-chiens-d-assistance-judiciaire-pour-soutenir-les-enfants-victimes-d-infractions-penales-39717>
- 48 Ravel, chien d'assistance judiciaire, Centre Hospitalier Mémorial France Etats-Unis Saint-Lô, available at : <https://ch-stlo.fr/ravel-chien-d-assistance-judiciaire/>
- 49 Gard. Rancho : un chien d'assistance judiciaire pour le tribunal de Nîmes, Raphaël Motte, 13 May 2022, https://actu.fr/occitanie/nimes_30189/gard-rancho-un-chien-d-assistance-judiciaire-pour-le-tribunal-de-nimes_50912693.html
- 50 Roucky, chien d'assistance judiciaire à Angers, dispose d'un compte Instagram et de cartes de visite, Josué Jean-Bart, 17 November 2022, available at : <https://www.ouest-france.fr/pays-de-la-loire/angers-49000/roucky-chien-d-assistance-judiciaire-a-angers-dispose-d-un-compte-instagram-et-de-cartes-de-visite-8da8e064-65df-11ed-9023-3db2565e335c>
- 51 Rumba, premier chien d'assistance judiciaire dans une gendarmerie pour le soutien aux victimes, 6 December 2022, available at : <https://handichiens.org/rumba-premier-chien-d-assistance-judiciaire-dans-une-gendarmerie-pour-le-soutien-aux-victimes/>
- 52 AVL Loiret, https://www.linkedin.com/posts/avl-loiret-53b040221_handichiens-chien-assistance-avl-activity-6981611350854619136-oZJZ/?trk=public_profile_like_view&originalSubdomain=mq
- 53 Ragnar, le premier chien d'assistance judiciaire de la police nationale en France a pris son service à Béziers, 4 January 2023, available at : <https://www.midilibre.fr/2023/01/04/ragnar-le-premier-chien-d-assistance-judiciaire-de-la-police-nationale-en-france-a-pris-son-service-a-beziers-10903778.php>
- 54 Handi'Chiens, « Un chien d'assistance judiciaire dans chaque département » pour le soutien aux victimes annonce le Ministre de la Justice, 21 Decembre 2022, available online : <https://handichiens.org/un-chien-d-assistance-judiciaire-dans-chaque-departement/>
- 55 Convention nationale relative au déploiement du chien d'assistance judiciaire, Ministère de la Justice, February 2023, http://www.justice.gouv.fr/art_pix/convention_nationale_chien_assistance_judiciaire.pdf
- 56 Le chien d'assistance judiciaire : un soutien pour les victimes, 13 February 2023 <http://www.justice.gouv.fr/delegation-interministerielle-daide-aux-victimes-12894/le-chien-d-assistance-judiciaire-un-soutien-pour-les-victimes-34754.html>

of courts, Handi'Chiens, victim support associations, bar associations, internal security forces, etc. The agreement states that the choice of handler may vary locally, but should favour members of victim support associations.

While not all countries will have the same national victim support structures or the capacity to quickly train as many dogs as was the case in France - the French model should be seen as a good practice to be replicated as much as possible.

Legislation can also be used to facilitate the inclusion of trained assistance dogs. In 2020, the American Bar Association issued the following resolution "resolved, that the American Bar Association urges federal, state, local, territorial and tribal governments and foreign governments to enact laws authorizing courts to allow specially trained dogs (called facility dogs) to assist victims/vulnerable witnesses in their participation at any stage of the criminal justice system, including during their testimony in any judicial proceedings, and, to ensure the health and well-being of the facility dogs."⁵⁷

3.2 FUNDING

Whilst there have been notable achievements in EU laws and policies related to victims' issues over the last decade, success is hampered by their limited implementation. Progress has focused on procedural issues rather than on the mental health and well-being of victims, or on the technicalities of service provision, or on the development of technological solutions. Billions have been poured into cancer research, yet access to similar funds for victim recovery and assistance is almost non-existent.

Experience indicates that the best way to ensure the sustainable delivery of victim support services is by ring-fencing funding for victim support, a model which could be recommended for FYDO support. While funding is coordinated to ensure the development and maintenance of a national FYDO system, it is irrelevant where it comes from, whether that be from the EU, national or local community budgets.

Costs related to the creation and maintenance of the FYDO programme, the purchase and training of the dogs, training of the handler and staff who will interact with the FYDO dogs, etc. will vary between countries. No matter what the costs, a specific budget line for FYDO dogs should be foreseen in national Victims' Rights Strategies⁵⁸.

⁵⁷ American Bar, Resolution 101A, available online: <https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/news/2021/02/midyear-resolutions/101a.pdf>

⁵⁸ National Framework for Comprehensive Victim Support, Victim Support Europe, 2022

3.3 SUSTAINABILITY OF DOG TRAINING AND PLACEMENT

As discussed above, for a national victim support system to be able to accommodate FYDO dogs in line with the requirements of this paper: dogs must be trained in accordance with FYDO training standards, by members or candidate ADI members, and must be handled by trained victim support professionals who provide support as per the applicable requirements of national systems.

National victim support systems should be developed to include a FYDO component and to ensure that any victim needing FYDO support can readily access it. Ideally, there should be a coordinated national system of victim support providers, who collaborate with an accredited national dog training association, working towards national FYDO coverage. However, not all countries have satisfactory national victim support services and others do not host an ADI member; many have neither the support services nor the dog trainers. Therefore, cross-border dog placements could be considered, with evaluation taking place on a case-by-case basis to ensure the dog's well-being and a quality standard of service for the victim.

National solidarity

Placing FYDO dogs across a country, based on geographical divisions, could ensure that victims benefitting from such assistance could have it. National agreement on the deployment of FYDO dogs across regions could be a potential solution, when creating a FYDO programme. In Marseille, France, during the Millas trial in September 2022, 2 dogs were available to support the victims and the accused⁵⁹. As there are no FYDO dogs in Marseille, two were deployed from Nevers and Nimes.

A similar situation could be envisaged following mass victimisation events or during a large trial involving numerous victims and family members.

⁵⁹ Drame de Millas : pourquoi deux chiens sont présents au procès ?, 21 September 2022, <https://www.europe1.fr/societe/drame-de-millas-pourquoi-deux-chiens-sont-presents-au-proces-4135659>



FACILITY DOG AT WORK!

There is a dog working in this space.

**This dog is not dangerous;
it's trained to work with victims.**

**This dog works with a handler,
if you want to interact with the dog, please,
speak to the handler.**

**Only handlers get to play with dogs,
give them orders, and take them out
for their much-needed toilet break.**

**Please don't touch the dog,
and never feed the dog without permission.**



Interested in starting a FYDO program? Please contact



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