

## **New methods are being sought to better protect victims of crime in Estonia**

Victim Support Europe in collaboration with The Ministry of Justice of Estonia has launched a project to protect victims of crime in Estonia, which focuses on how the state can provide better support to victims. Today, the opening seminar of the project will take place in Jõhvi.

The project will initially be implemented in Lääne-Virumaa and Ida-Virumaa. Lessons learned from the project results will be adapted so that these activities can later be used throughout the country. **"We are excited that the authorities of the Viru region have accepted the project and the participation of Ida-Viru Central Hospital and Narva Hospital is especially welcome. We see from research that victims most often turn to health care providers. If the victim ends up at the hospital, we will help him or her reach the public services he or she needs after receiving medical treatment. For example, the hospital itself invites a victim support or social worker, gives the patient a victim support leaflet, or arranges the first call with victim support service from the doctor's office together with a victim"**, said Markus Kärner, Undersecretary of Criminal Policy.

The main objectives of the project are to improve the understanding of what is currently lacking in the support and services provided to victims both during, before and outside the proceedings, and how to better provide services in cooperation with the authorities, improve information to victims and make victims' wishes more visible. It is also important to increase the understanding of the needs of victims of crime, to improve their referral to support services and to experience their recovery from victimization. There is also a need to raise public awareness of the rights of victims of crime and the services available to them.



**"The AREV (Advancing Rights of Estonian Victims) project is a key milestone in the improvement of the lives of Estonian victims. It is only by working together across all sectors that we can truly achieve long-term change for victims of crime. Victim Support Europe is delighted to be involved in this project and look forward to working with the Estonian government, law enforcement, justice and health stakeholders as well as civil society for the next two years. We hope that this pioneer project will inspire other countries in the European Union"**, said Geraldine Hanna, President of Victim Support Europe.

As a new area, the project focuses on healthcare providers - how to spot and refer victims who have arrived to the hospital as patients but also need support other than medical care.

The project assesses the needs of the community in the pilot area and maps the victim support services available in the particular community and the local options for victim protection. Training and information materials will be provided to ensure that police, victim support and health professionals are more friendly and that victims do not feel like victims again during the proceedings.

**"The fact that Victim Support Europe helps to implement the project is an extraordinary opportunity for Estonia, as they have a rich and unique wealth of experience and expertise in protecting victims of crime,"** Kärner added.

The Victim Protection Project has been launched in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, Victim Support Europe and the European Union and will run for two years. During this time, the Ministry of Justice, the Police and Border Guard, the Social Security Board, the health sector and other stakeholders will work together to develop specific tools and processes to ensure protection and better support for victims of crime.