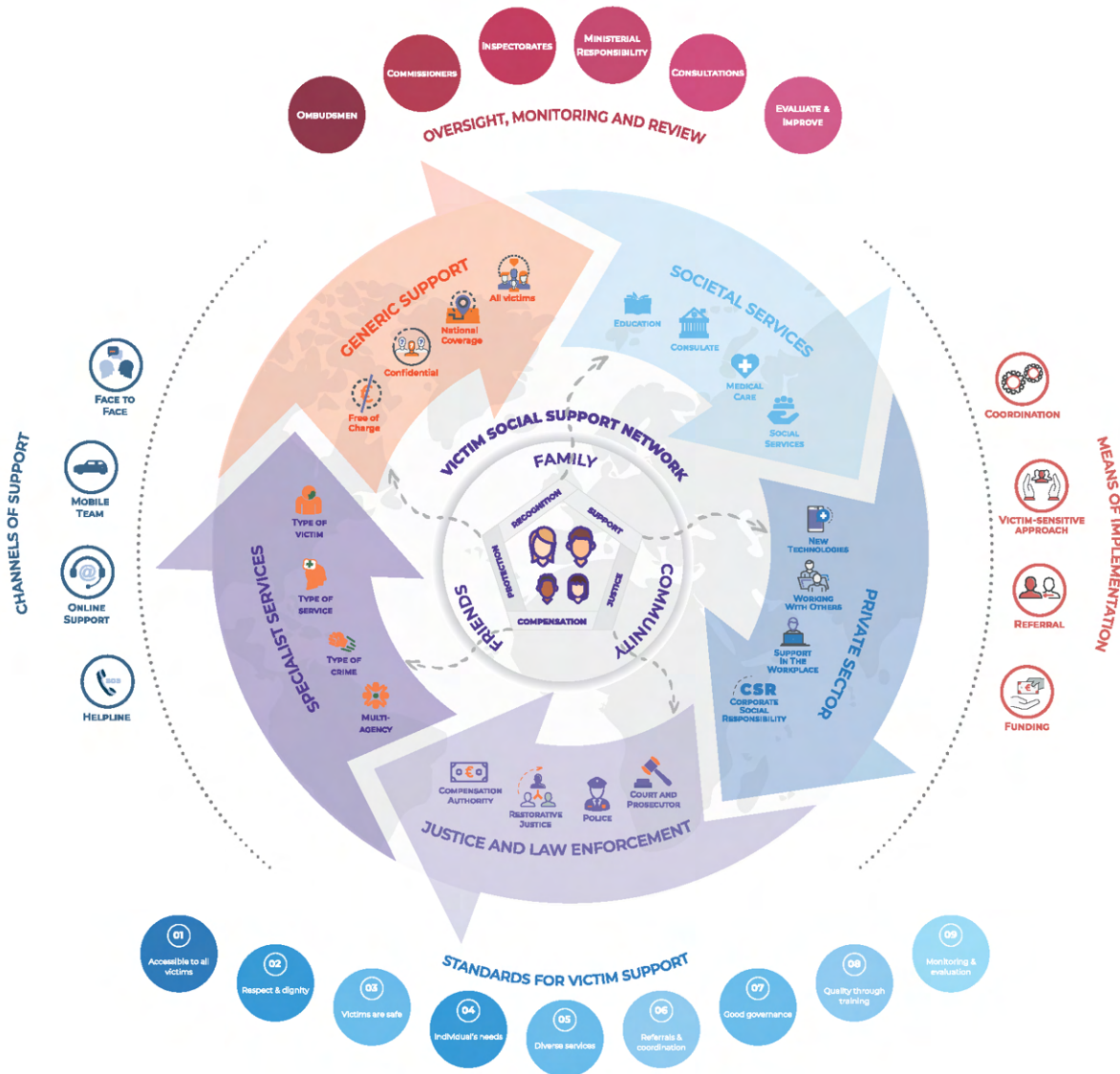
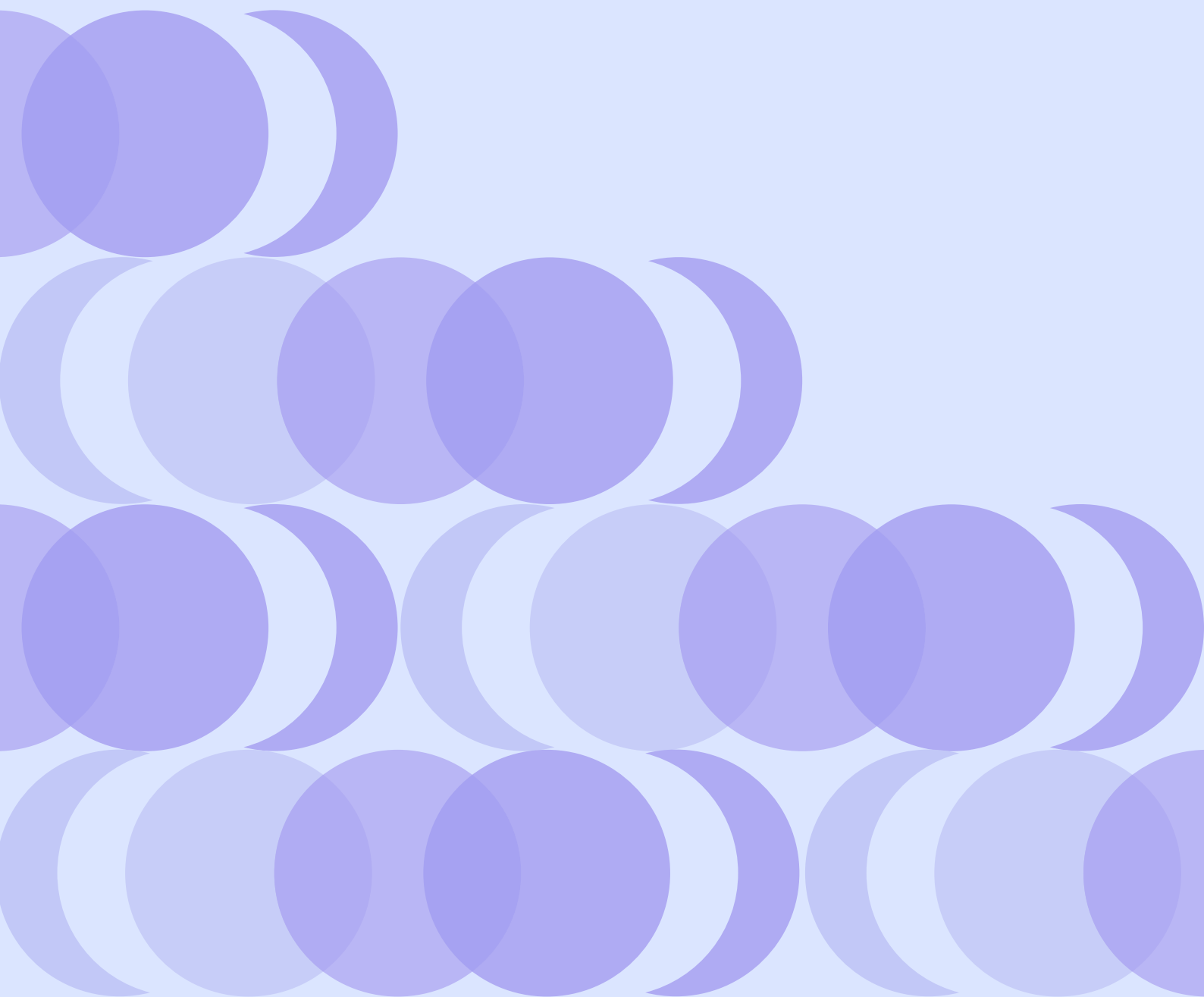


NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR COMPREHENSIVE VICTIM SUPPORT





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every year, an estimated 75 million people in the European Union, 15% of the population, fall victim to serious crimes. The impact can devastate individuals psychologically, physically, financially, and with respect to their work, social and family life. Crime weakens our societies, economies, security and the rule of law.

A robust response to crime, that fully mitigates those impacts, requires a well-organised support system. However, in the past decades, the development of victim support has been incremental, piecemeal and often sectoral in focus. The results in almost every country are multiple layers of response, duplication or gaps in service provision, and a failure to co-ordinate actions across all sectors. Simply put, victims are not guaranteed easy access to quality support where, when and how they need it.

Almost forty years after the adoption of the UN's basic principles of justice for victims of crime, a new approach in Europe is required. One that is fit for the 21st Century; one that moves the understanding of victim support beyond a niche issue. An understanding that bridges individual organisations' ad hoc projects and essential health and justice systems.

Victim support must be understood as an evolving concept that encompasses all areas of life requiring a long term, coordinated and comprehensive approach. Support must be organised in a systemic, structured and strategic way that promotes everyone's role in assisting victims and addressing the impact of crime. Countries, which ensure that support is delivered by actors operating in unison and in accordance with long-term strategies, are in a better position to effectively support victims than those based on individualised, short term decisions. Every analysis shows that the economic and social benefits far outweigh any costs of implement support systems.

A national system for victim support is necessary to ensure a stable, comprehensive solution that progressively addresses the multiple needs of diverse victim populations. To that end, Victim Support Europe has developed the National Framework for Comprehensive Victim Support to help States better implement victims' rights and to provide an improved understanding of how to address victims' needs, ensuring all victims are recognised, treated with dignity and respect, and have access to appropriate services.

The National Support Framework aims to change the way we perceive victim engagement, from that of a silo approach with each organisation operating in single sphere and single perspective, to one where **every entity coming into contact with victims does so from a victim-centred, human rights perspective**. Instead of asking how a victim fits within a country's system, States must adapt systems to ensure that all negative impacts of crime are addressed.

A national support framework will vary by country; however, it should be designed to ensure that the organisation and its delivery of support for victims, is managed in a strategic way that formalises cooperation and coordination between government and civil society organisations working with victims of crime.

Having the at victim being at the center of the framework, their needs – respect and recognition, support, protection, access to justice and compensation – should be acknowledged and all necessary measures should be in place to meet them. Evidence indicates that the stronger and more supportive a victim's social network, the better the outcomes. Building greater societal awareness of how the public can help victims may have an important effect on improving resilience.

When victims need professional support, they can turn to generic and specialist

support services – whether run by civil society or governments. Generic victim support offers its services to all victims of crime irrespective of the type of crime or the victim’s situation. It is an essential net to ensure no victim is forgotten. Specialist support is directed at specific types of victims and can offer a range of services to help them. Such support may be offered by separate organisations or within a generic support organisation.

While support services play a vital role in victims’ recovery and enable them to access further rights, victims will interact with other sectors and services in their daily life. The quality of their engagement with different actors (law enforcement agencies, work place, insurance company, medical staff, teachers, etc.) will impact their recovery – either further damaging a victim or maximising a victim’s positive experience and reducing the risk of secondary victimisation. Individuals interacting with victims, existing policies and procedures, and physical infrastructure can all determine whether the needs of victims are met.

Mechanisms such as oversight, monitoring and evaluation should play a substantial role in the implementation of the National Support Framework. Key national actors such as Victims’ Commissioners, victims’ coordinators or specific Ministries can take the lead to ensure that laws, policies and procedures mainstream victims’ rights and that all sectors cooperate in a coordinated, efficient manner.

Sufficient sustainable funding streams are required both to operate victims’ support services and to ensure that sectors interacting with victims employ trained professionals who understand victimisation, its impact, and the needs of victims. Referrals, based on an opt-out approach, should also be implemented to ensure that all victims receive appropriate, targeted and timely support.

The combination of all these different mechanisms and the coordination between actors and sectors will have the greatest

impact on victims who need protection, support and justice. These multiple methods for delivering and improving support services will help ensure a coherent and comprehensive response to crime from the victim’s perspective.



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