

Practice sheet on COOPERATION and AWARENESS

This document includes a series of concrete ideas on the practical implementation of Article 26 of the Victims' Directive, and not only concerning *cooperation and awareness*.

You will find the following examples:

1. Cooperation by participating in international projects | Portugal
2. Cooperation practices within Croatia
3. Cooperation practices within Austria
4. Cooperation practices within Hungary
5. Cooperation practices within Sweden
6. Awareness practices in Hungary
7. Awareness campaigns in Belgium



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1. Cooperation by participating in projects | Portugal

APAV has been a project coordinator and partner in several European and national projects. For example:

Projects Infovictims I (2011-2013) and II (2014 - 2016)

OBJECTIVES: Contribute to the increase of information given to the victims of crime concerning the criminal justice system, their rights and the ways to exercise them in different partner countries (Portugal, Sweden, Czech Republic, Austria, Germany, Poland and Scotland).

Co-financed by the European Union under the Criminal Justice Programme, Infovictims allowed the development of several informative resources:

- the website www.infovictims.com, for informing about the rights of victims of crime, addressing the functioning of the criminal justice system in a simple and accessible language;
- the [brochure “Infovictims: know your rights as a victim of crime”](#) which condenses and complements the information available on the website;
- the [poster “Rights of Victims of Crime”](#) offers a simple and attractive way to raise the awareness and inform about the rights of victims of crime.

Project ABC Justice (2013-2014)

OBJECTIVES: To provide youngsters with simple but accurate, clear and useful information on how the criminal justice system works, presented in a child-friendly and attractive way.

Co-financed by the Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF) of the United States Embassy, ABC Justice allowed the development of:

- the informative and interactive website www.abcjustica.pt (available in Portuguese and in English) specifically tailored for children aged between 12-17 years. The rights of victims of crime within the context of the criminal justice system and the ways and resources to get them are explained. Youngsters are also provided with an overview of the different phases of the criminal proceedings as well as with the role of the most relevant figures that work or participate in the criminal justice system.

More information about other projects at <http://www.apav.pt/publiproj/>



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2. Cooperation practices within Croatia

Croatian respondents identified different strategies that contribute to increasing cooperation between criminal justice authorities and victim support:

- The *presence of protocols and official documents* governing all competent bodies dealing with victims of crime for defining conducts, positions and limitations. A respondent named a few of them, such as: the ‘codes of conduct’ in case of sexual violence, in case of domestic violence, in case of neglect or abuse, and in case of human trafficking. These protocols include information about methods and areas of cooperation between the competent bodies involved in the identification and fight of certain crimes. The purpose is to provide competent authorities with the conditions for an effective and comprehensive action to improve victims’ assistance in the country.
- *Regular contacts between victim support officers and prosecutors* are used in Croatia to further enhance cooperation. A respondent explained that practitioners from the Croatian Victims and Witnesses Support Offices keep prosecutors informed on a regular basis, either by phone or in person, sharing information about the victims’ situation (e.g. mental status, health) so that prosecutors can better protect, inform, examine, understand and support the victim on a case-to-case basis.
- Cooperation is established for *dealing with specific categories of victims of crime* (e.g. victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, human trafficking, child abuse). In these cases, different ministerial bodies (e.g. police, prosecution office, social welfare, health care) meet to find a solution to certain cases, by giving special attention to the victims of those crimes. Additional cooperation involves also NGOs, social services, prisons and probation offices.
- The Croatian Ministry of Justice established and coordinates a ‘*National Committee for the Monitoring and Improvement of the Victim and Witness Support System*’. This Committee includes representatives from the police, health care, social welfare, war veterans, prosecutor’s office, government’s office for human rights, NGOs and independent professionals. This Committee is in charge of delivering a national strategy for the ‘Victim and Witness Support’ services by the end of the year; this strategy is then transformed into an action plan defining the specific activities.
- *Trainings, conferences, coordination, and exchanges of information (via phone, email)* are important for enhancing cooperation between professionals in the field.



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3. Cooperation practices within Austria

Strategies for increasing cooperation between different bodies dealing with victims of crime are developed all over the year in Austria.

Once a year, *round tables* are organised in each regional court to bring together judges, prosecutors and victim support officers to discuss problems and answer questions on victims' rights and assistance in the country.

In addition, four times a year similar round tables are organised at the Ministry of Justice. As a general rule, only victim support services recognised by the Ministry of Justice can participate in these round tables (i.e. only those victim support services which have a 'contract' with the Ministry of Justice, which provides regulation and financial support to make the service operate).



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4. Cooperation practices within Hungary

Thanks to the structure of the victim support services, cooperation between victim support officers is easily established and special assistance can be granted for victims of crimes in Hungary.

This Member State has twenty victim support offices (VSS), one per each county's governmental office (including the capital city Budapest).

The Victim Support Unit (VSU) in Budapest is the head-office with national competence which supervises the local VSSs. The VSU consists of five staff members: three lawyers, one psychologist and one social worker, all of them civil servants. The VSU runs a 24/7 free of charge 'Victim Support Line' where seven staff members with diverse degrees are contracted.

Local VSSs employ mostly lawyers, some psychologists and social workers, all of them receive further trainings. In total, about 40-50 staff members provide victim support services assisted by about 14 administrators and functional staff (all civil servants). In some districts, 'Volunteer Coordinators' are employed and they work with approximately 200 volunteers.

VSSs perform effectively also thanks to establishment of networks involving other actors dealing directly with victims of crime, including civil society, NGOs, churches, foundations, health institutions, immigration offices, municipalities.

This professional interdisciplinary cooperation is sustained through the joint participation of these different actors in programmes, trainings, seminars (sometimes dealing with specific themes, such as supporting victims with special needs, preventing and fighting human trafficking, or considering child-friendly options during criminal proceedings). This cooperation was necessary not only to ameliorate the services provided to victims of crime, but also to grow at the organisational and professional levels.



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5. Cooperation practices within Sweden

In Sweden, victim support services provide complementary measures to other services in society, thus they work in line with other bodies to prevent crime and protect vulnerable groups from victimization experiences.

For example, cooperation is well-established between the Swedish victim support services and:

- Municipalities, which have the legal responsibility to ensure that victims of crimes are given support;
- Social services, which complement the work done by victim support services;
- Police, which jointly prepare strategies for assisting victims with special protection and support needs, such as women, children, elderly people, people with disabilities;
- The local Crime Prevention Council, that in many places includes victim support services within their members;
- Local commercial shops, in order to prevent minor crimes and increase security for the shops' staff;
- Associations for retired people, in order to protect elderly people from crime;
- Schools, in order to find ways to prevent and fight against bullying or other conflicts/violence between children and youngsters.



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6. Awareness practices in Hungary

Victim Support Services (VSSs) in Hungary are governmental organisations dealing with victims of crimes. In addition to providing support, these VSS provide:

- Awareness raising (in senior clubs, schools, public events, festivals, in local and national media);
- Trainings on interdisciplinary co-operation;
- Programs focusing on special groups of victims (elderly people, school pupils and students, people living in remote areas, etc.);
- Participating in the national coordination mechanism against trafficking of human beings.

The flyer from the VSSs has been translated in English. On the first page, under the logo of the Office of Justice, it asks the questions: ‘Affected by crime? Have been victimized? Help is available!’. On the same page, the VSSs are listed according to the district, including the phone number to call. On the second page of the flyer more information is given about the purpose of VS, the target group of these services, how and what type of help victims can get (incl. further explanation on ‘assertion of interests’ and the ‘instant monetary aid’), contact details and what victims should do to received such help. It concludes with the slogan: ‘Contact us with confidence!’.

Hungary was committed in raising awareness and increasing cooperation concerning **restorative justice**. When it was firstly introduced, the Probation Services organised a series of informative lectures and trainings for judges and prosecutors. Restorative justice practitioners participate in conferences to collect more information and increase their network, but they also cooperate with civil society organisations for raising awareness and promoting acceptance of restorative justice in the country



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7. Awareness campaigns in Belgium

A Belgian respondent listed some practices used in Flanders:

- The existence of ‘liaison officers’ connecting different agencies and the work done by ‘justice assistance’ having daily contacts with public prosecutors help to raise awareness and increase cooperation;
- Printed communication materials, like the leaflet ‘*U bent slachtoffers/ Vous êtes victimes*’ (You are a victim) which is delivered to every victim making a complaint at the police station;
- Regular targeted campaigns on victims’ issues or new provisions.



Concerning these public campaigns, the respondent gave the example of the central phone number ‘1712’, established since 12 March 2012 to support child victims of abuse.

Through this phone number, victims of all forms of violence can receive a free and discreet support. This new number integrates all previously existing hotlines and help desks. A large public campaign has been launched via the Internet (e.g. videos on YouTube), via the TV channels, via targeted collaborations with youth/sport organisations, via a poster campaign on public streets.