

How to Stay Safe as an EP Elections Candidate

#NoVictimLeftBehind #VictimSupportForAll #EUElections2024

As a candidate for the European Parliament Elections, we're sure you are conscious of some of the risks you and those close to you may face from your candidacy. It is important for you to understand the risks so that you can be prepared.

Victim Support Europe (VSE) is dedicated to helping you stay safe, and to reaching help whenever you need it. The information below is a starting point for you to understand risks, the impact of crime and where to find support.

→ Who is at risk:

All persons may become a victim of crime. However, we are focusing on candidates running for the European Parliament, as well as voters and wider populations. You, your team, your family and friends, as well as your constituencies may be at risk of becoming a victim of crime which may be committed in person or online and may be perpetrated through various technologies.

Possible risks you may face:

✔ **Misinformation and disinformation related to you or your campaign:** This means false or inaccurate information that is shared about you or your campaign. Typically, misinformation is not shared with intent, whereas disinformation is created with the intention to deceive or mislead the public.

Misinformation and disinformation can include altered, misleading or false content. Acts may aim at damaging reputation or political credibility, and may be used as part of a wider campaign of threats and harassment.

- ✔ **Threats - politically motivated or hate crime/ hate speech:** You, your family or your team may face threats based on your political commitments but you may also be targeted based on various aspects of your personal identity such as gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, religion etc.

Threats can take many different forms such as harassment, stalking, doxing, psychological and verbal abuse, personal network harm etc.

- ✔ **Physical violence including terrorism:** unfortunately, threats may spill over to physical violence and even terrorism aimed at instilling fear to affect the electoral process and public discourse in general.
- ✔ **The spillover effect:** besides the direct effect on you, there can be indirect harm on your constituency, supporters, human rights defenders or the public at large.

→ Staying Safe

It is important to be prepared and to take steps to protect yourself and others.

Check for information with your election authority, local police or charities. Often, they will already provide specific information relevant to your country. Advice might include:

- **Conduct an offline/ online security check** to review security of office space, your home and personal data.
- **Secure your personal and digital space** by, for example, locking doors, saving phone numbers, setting alarms, installing security cameras, backing up your data, changing your passwords regularly, etc.
- **Avoid working or doing visits alone**
- **Ensure colleagues or family are aware of your plans** or where you are and when you plan to return
- **Don't engage** with individuals who are **stalking or harassing you**
- **Keep records and evidence** of unwanted and intimidating behaviour and report it
- **Check safety advice** on social media platforms. You can report abuse, block trolls and more.
- **Insure** your belongings.

For physical danger or where you experience physical violence

- **Get to a safe space:** it is best to go with a trusted person to a safe and secure location. More information (videos, tips, etc) on what to do in case of a terror attack or mass victimisation incident can be found through VSE's CREST project under [project results](#)
- **Seek medical care** if you or a person you are with becomes physically injured
- **Contact local police** to report a crime and/or gain further information on your rights
- **Limit movement** if you are made aware that a threat to you or the area has been made

How crime impacts you

Crime and the threat of crime affects people differently. It is important to understand that these are normal reactions to an abnormal situation.

- Depending on the type of crime, you may be affected physically, emotionally and psychologically. You may have trouble sleeping, constantly think about what happened or what may happen, you may be short tempered and distracted. This can have physical effects such as increased heartrate, feeling ill etc. which can lead to long term problems such as depression or anxiety related illness.
- The impact can affect your family and social life. You may feel guilty or blame yourself, especially if others are affected.
- It's important to remember it's not your fault and you are not alone.

Reporting a crime to the police

It is difficult to know whether the unwanted behaviour you are experiencing is a crime. The police and electoral authorities are always available to advise you. However, as a general rule the following types of behaviour could constitute a crime in your country:

- ✓ Communications that include abusive or threatening language
- ✓ Repeated unwanted contact may be harassment or stalking
- ✓ Threats or abuse focusing on specific characteristics such as race or religion
- ✓ Physical abuse

To find out how to report a crime, click your country on the EU Justice portal: [here](#)

→ Addressing online harassment & violence:

It is best to report posts and users, as well as block the account(s). Meta shared an article that may be of interest to you: [Here](#). It may also be appropriate to contact the police.

The Council of Europe provides links to a number of reporting pages here

For YouTube click here 

 For Tik Tok click here

For Whatsapp click here 

 For LinkedIn click here 

→ Finding support

The unwanted behaviour or crime you may experience can be highly variable from rude or aggressive language through to physical violence. Whilst you may not feel impacted or may be resilient, it is important not to minimise your experience nor ignore criminal activity. Sometimes, you may only feel the effects several days or weeks after the crime.

Irrespective of whether you report the crime, support exists to help you cope in the aftermath– in the short and long term. Those services are free and confidential.

Victim support services help you deal with emotional and psychological impact, and provide practical assistance. They can help if you choose to report and during any criminal proceedings.



You can find **practical advice** on VSE's website here



You can find **victim support** services on VSE's website here



Many countries have a national **victim support helpline** e.g. 116 006



The EU justice portal also has **information on support** and criminal proceedings by country here



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