



MINUTES OF VICTIM SUPPORT EUROPE GENERAL MEETING 18 November 2014 Renaissance Hotel, Brussels

1. Opening and welcome

Helgard van Hüllen and João Lázaro open the meeting and welcome everybody

2. Apologies and Present

See list of attendees at the end.

3. Report Report of Vice Presidents – Helgard van Hüllen and João Lázaro

- Recent and upcoming events and workshops are presented as well as all conferences and meetings attended by VSE representatives in 2014
- As announced previously, VSE has appointed an Executive Director: Levent Altan. Levent will be officially employed from 24 November 2014. Before joining Victim Support Europe, he worked as Principal Legal Advisor at Milieu, a multi-disciplinary consultancy specialising in providing legal and policy services for public sector clients. From 2009 to 2012, he was Criminal Justice Legislative Officer at the European Commission where he was responsible for drafting and negotiating the EU Directive establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime through detailed impact analysis, consultation with stakeholders and co-ordination with Commission Directorates.
- EC Framework Partnership Agreement application: VSE application for an EC 3-year partnership agreement under the Justice programme was submitted on 12 November 2014. The key objectives of VSE work programme for the 3 years (2015-2017) are:
 - o Support the development of victim support in EU Member States.
 - o Support the development of existing victim support organisations in EU Member States.
 - o Support the implementation of the EU Directive in relation to cross-border victimisation.
 - o Develop a system of accreditation of victim support service providers.
 - o Develop state-of-the-art training tools for victim support.
 - o Improve operational capacity of Victim Support Europe.
 - o Represent wider victim interest and stakeholders.

4. Report of Treasurer – Jo Keaney

See financial report in paperwork:

Year-to-date position shows a total surplus of €154k against a budget of €142k, this is €12k better at Q3. This mainly relates to savings on staff secondment fees.

Expected 31st December 2014 position – to be at a total surplus of €72k compared to the budget of €83k this is lower than expected by €11k and relates primarily to travel and IT costs being higher than budgeted. This is an improved position for us as it means we are increasing our reserves to help support our future position. This gives us a foundation of 3-4 months of operating costs.

5. Presentation of workshop topics suggested for Leaders Meeting on 19 November

João Lázaro suggests choosing the following topics for the 3 workshops of 19 November:

- Accreditation
- Training
- Cross-border collaboration/mechanism

Members are asked to register for one workshop.

6. Resolutions

There is a quorum for the vote as 12 full members out of 22 are present.

- Appointment process of new statutory auditor for the period 2015-2017:

The Treasurer Jo Keaney asks for the agreement of the General Meeting to allow the Executive Board to look for a new statutory auditor from 2015.

The General Meeting agree unanimously.

- Resolution: modification of article 3.3(f) of the Constitution as follows:

“The activities which VSE proposes to carry out in order to achieve its objects are the following :

(...) (f) to raise funds (~~but not by means of taxable trading~~). (...)”

The resolution is unanimously approved by the General Meeting.

7. Members' reports

The participants are asked to make a short presentation of the current situation in their organization and member state, particularly regarding the implementation of the Directive 2012/29/EU on victims' rights.

The Italian “Associazione LIBRA Onlus” is welcomed as a new associate member of Victim Support Europe.

Hungary:

A lot of changes are going on in Hungary at the moment and there are many uncertainties regarding the implementation. The government VS is responsible for the implementation of the directive but they are currently restructuring.

Sweden:

Positive development: the Police is going to be a unified institution (it used to be split).

Ireland:

The Victims' Rights Alliance is working on the implementation. It has 15 members (VS organisations). One idea is to follow the example of the UK "Track my crime" website (please see <https://kent.trackmycrime.police.uk/>).

The Police will play a crucial role.

Czech Republic:

In the Czech Republic a new law containing 80% of the directive came into force on 1 August 2013.

Bily Kruh Bezpeci is currently working on training police officers on the new law and the directive. The challenge for the police is that there are too many new rights at the same time. It is difficult to properly inform the victims.

On 1 January 2015 Bily Kruh Bezpeci will open the 116006 helpline.

Italy:

In Italy new legislation was introduced for female victims of gender violence in 2013. The main problem is that the police officers has not been properly trained about this new legislation.

Austria:

The biggest challenges of the directive in Austria are articles 3 and 22. Weisser Ring Austria is currently working on recommendations for the ministries regarding the implementation.

Germany:

The funding question is difficult as the federal states will be responsible for the funding (not a national funding stream).

France:

A negative aspect is that no new law will be introduced to implement the directive. A positive aspect is that the government is working hard on the article 22.

The Netherlands:

The directive is a big challenge for the police and prosecutors who have the longest list of actions to comply with this new piece of legislation.

Cross-border victims are also a big challenge as no system is currently in place. The referral currently only works on the basis of personal contacts.

England and Wales:

The directive is already in place. A victim's code practice came in earlier this year. It has expanded the scope of victims VS England and Wales is dealing with (ex: business crime, etc).

Currently, there is a discussion going on about the helpline and how it should look like from April 2015.

VS England and Wales has unfortunately lost the witness service which was tendered and given to another charity.

Portugal:

Nothing much is happening regarding the implementation. There is a working group including forensics, judges, police and prosecutors. It looks like the transposition is going to be very formal. The political focus is on women and children. APAV is working on enlarging this view.

APAV is going to be a consultant of the ministry of Justice regarding the implementation.

The helpline is being developed and will become a call centre.

Finland:

In Finland there are 2 working groups:

- 1) one looking at services from both the Directive and the Istanbul Convention perspectives.
- 2) one looking at legal changes

Riku (VS Finland) is represented in both working groups.

Working group 1 is setting up a system to collect fees from offenders. VS Finland is mentioned as a beneficiary. It might be in place from 2016.

Working group 2: procedural rights are well implemented. Regarding article 22 and the right to be informed, legislative changes will be needed.

Croatia:

Croatian Victim and Witness Support Service is currently aiming at spreading support vertically and horizontally.

Problems:

- War crimes trials: there is no agreement with Serbia for Croatian witnesses/victims who need to go to Serbia to attend trials.
- Too much theory, not enough best practice regarding the directive.

Spain:

No focus of the government on the implementation of the directive. There is no interest in implementing the directive. No training is currently planned.

Estonia:

There are many VS organisations in Estonia but no generic VS support body. As a result victims often do not know where to turn to. They all go to the police which is underfunded and cannot cope. Victims are not aware of their rights.

VSE is therefore a very good platform to hear good examples from other countries.

Poland:

There are no standards for VS in Poland. An accreditation system would be very interesting to define standards.

Regarding article 22 of the directive, the government is talking about individual assessment forms (example of France).

8. Conclusions and closing

The situation in the different member states can be summed up as follows:

- In many countries, there is a lack of information towards VS organisations. The government is not enough informing NGOs about their plans.
- Training is problem: who is going to do it, how is it going to look like, etc

The changes brought by the directive must be in minds and in hearts, otherwise, the implementation will be just formal but will not make a real difference for victims.

Thank you very much!

Helgard van Hüllen
Vice-President of Victim Support Europe

João Lázaro
Vice-President of Victim Support Europe

List of attendees:

Full Members

João Lázaro, Vice-President of Victim Support Europe - Associação Portuguesa de Apoio à Vítima (Portugal)

Helgard van Hüllen, Treasurer of Victim Support Europe - Weisser Ring Germany

Victor Jammers, VSE Executive Board Member – Slachtofferhulp Nederland (NL)

Jo Keaney, VSE Executive Board Member - Victim Support England & Wales (UK)

Sabrina Bellucci, VSE Executive Board Member – INAVEM (France)

Tiina Rantanen, VSE Executive Board Member - Rikosuhripaivystys Suomessa (Finland)

Carmen Rasquete, VSE Project Coordinator – APAV (Portugal)

Barbara Unterlerchner – Weisser Ring Austria

Petra Vitousova - Bily Kruh Bezpeci (Czech Republic)

Marketa Vitousova - Bily Kruh Bezpeci (Czech Republic)

Steen Knudsen - Offerrådgivningen (Denmark)

Leena-Kaisa Åberg - Rikosuhripaivystys Suomessa (Finland)

Petra Klein - Weisser Ring Germany

László Fügedi - Fehér Gyűrű (Hungary)

Ákos Harmath - Fehér Gyűrű (Hungary)

Eva Larsson – Brottsofferjourernas Riksförbund (Sweden)
Gähtlin Leppänen – Ohvriabi (Estonia)
Greenika Perezjuk – Ohvriabi (Estonia)
Helena Whitehead - Victim Support England & Wales (UK)

Associate members

Lisa Kennedy – ITAS (Ireland)
Michele Lee Puckhaber – Crime Victims Helpline (Ireland)
Joan Deane – AdVIC (Ireland)
Annie Mulvaney – AdVIC (Ireland)
Tomasz Piechowiak - Subvenia Victima (Poland)
Marzena Piechowiak - Subvenia Victima (Poland)
Olga Brażkowska - Subvenia Victima (Poland)
Michał Wasylko - Subvenia Victima (Poland)
José Miguel Ayllón Camacho - ANVDV (Spain)
Miren Špek - Croatian Victim and Witness Support Service (Croatia)
Danijela Ivanović - Independent Sector for Victim and Witness Support, Ministry of Justice Croatia
Elisa Corbari - Associazione LIBRA Onlus (Italy)

Staff

Hélène Heinrichs, VSE Administrative Officer (VSE office Brussels, Belgium)
Levent Altan, VSE Executive Director (VSE office Brussels, Belgium)

Apologies

David McKenna – Victim Support Scotland (UK)