

EU Victims' Rights Strategy

June 2020
#EuVictimsRights

Crime can affect us all. Every year **millions of people** in the European Union become victims of crime. In 2017 only, **around 15 million serious offences**, such as homicide, child sexual exploitation or sexual violence, were recorded in the European Union. The **objective** of this Strategy is to **ensure that all victims of crime can fully rely on their rights no matter where in the EU or in what circumstances the crime took place**. This first EU Strategy on victims' rights sets out a number of actions for the Commission as well as Member States and civil society for the next 5 years.

The Strategy is based on 5 PRIORITIES



1. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH VICTIMS AND PROVIDING FOR SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR VICTIMS TO REPORT CRIME

- Too often victims are not aware of their rights. Persons in contact with victims, who should inform them about their rights are often **not well trained** to do so.
- **Crime under-reporting is another serious problem** due to the fear of the offender or of the risks of negative consequences from participating in the judicial process.

*"I was called a 'gorilla', 'n*****', 'black b*****'. I was punched, bitten and had my hair pulled out"*

Black-African woman,
victim of racial hate crime.

Some key actions

➤ European Commission:

- Launch an EU campaign to raise awareness about victims' rights and to promote specialist support and protection for victims with specific needs;
- Provide information, support and protection for victims, and to promote restorative justice services;
- Promote training activities for judicial and law enforcement authorities;
- Provide for EU funding to national victim support organisations and relevant community-based organisations.

➤ Member States:

- Ensure full and correct implementation of the Victims' Rights Directive and other EU rules on victims' rights;
- Launch national awareness campaigns about victims' rights;
- Support civil society in strengthening victims' rights, including with the help of available EU funding.

➤ Other stakeholders:

- Victim support organisations to engage with national authorities and participate in mutual training activities.



2. IMPROVING PROTECTION AND SUPPORT OF THE MOST VULNERABLE VICTIMS

Special attention must be paid to victims with specific needs of protection from the risks of secondary, repeat victimisation, intimidation and retaliation.

“Police officers should be trained to offer LGBTI victims the support they need, before they take up their duties. This training course is essential and should be mandatory”

Yasmine, LGBTI +, victim of hate speech

Some key actions

➤ European Commission:

- Promote actions that build on the lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Promote integrated and targeted EU approach to support victims with special needs such as child victims, victims of gender-based or domestic violence, victims of racist and xenophobic hate crime, LGBTI+ victims of hate crime, elderly victims and victims with disabilities, through EU funding possibilities and the EU awareness campaign on victims' rights;
- EU accession to the Istanbul Convention or alternative legislative measures that achieve the same objective;
- Assess introduction of minimum standards on victims' physical protection, and where necessary present legislative proposals by 2022;
- Assess tools at EU level to allow for reporting of crime for migrant victims and for victims in detention, and where necessary present legislative proposals by 2022;
- Implement the guiding principles on ensuring protection and support for victims of hate crime and hate speech;
- Ensure a smooth functioning of the EU Centre of Expertise for Victims of Terrorism.

➤ **Member States:**

- Take actions that build on the lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular actions aimed at ensuring that victims of gender-based and domestic violence have **access to support and protection**;
- Set up integrated and targeted **specialist support services for the most vulnerable victims**, including Child Houses, Family Houses, LGBTI+ safe houses;
- **Facilitate cooperation and ensure a coordinated approach to victims' rights** between judicial and law enforcement authorities, health care and social workers, among others.

➤ **Other stakeholders:**

- Civil society organisations to **provide support to victims in cooperation with the relevant national authorities**.



3. FACILITATING VICTIMS' ACCESS TO COMPENSATION

In many Member States, victims' access to compensation is difficult. Victims can claim State compensation only at the end of a long, often expensive and time-consuming

process, which starts with criminal proceedings and is followed by attempts to receive compensation from the offender.

Some key actions

➤ **European Commission:**

- **Monitor and assess the EU legislation on compensation**, including state compensation, offender's compensation and if necessary propose measures to complement this framework by 2022.

➤ **Member States:**

- **Evaluate national compensation schemes** and, if necessary, eliminate the existing procedural hurdles;
- **Ensure that fair and appropriate state compensation for violent, intentional crimes**, including victims of terrorism is reflected in the national budgets;
- Take actions to ensure that victims are not exposed to **secondary victimisation during the compensation procedure**;
- **Cooperate with other Member States in cross-border cases**.

➤ **Other stakeholders:**

- The European Network on Victims' Rights and the European network of contact points for compensation to explore **how to improve their cooperation and increase the efficiency of the latter**;
- The Victim support organisations to **engage with the national compensation authorities to offer support**, exchange best practices and mutual training activities.

"The first time I claimed compensation, my application was rejected. This made me feel yet again that I was worthless and my self-esteem took a further hit."

Petra, from Sweden, who suffered rape



4. STRENGTHENING COOPERATION AND COORDINATION AMONG ALL RELEVANT ACTORS

All victims of crime should be recognised and treated in a respectful, professional, tailored and non-discriminatory manner. This **requires the involvement of all relevant actors**. They include police, judicial

authorities, court staff, victim support services, practitioners and compensation authorities. Some victims also depend on medical staff, education staff, social services staff, or detention staff.

Some key actions

➤ **European Commission:**

- Set up the **Victims' Rights Platform** – gathering EU level actors relevant in the area of victims' rights.

➤ **Member States:**

- **Set up national victims' rights strategies** that take a comprehensive and holistic approach to victims' rights and involve all actors likely to come into contact with victims;
- Take actions aimed at building societies that are more resilient by **promoting higher involvement of the civil society into national actions**.



5. STRENGTHENING THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF VICTIMS' RIGHTS

The recently adopted Action Plan on human rights and democracy (2020-2024) reaffirms the EU's commitment to promoting, protecting and fulfilling human

rights worldwide. The European Union aims at **ensuring that high standards of victims' rights are met in all contexts**, including in international instances.

➤ **Some of the key actions for the European Union:**

- **Strengthen cooperation with international and regional partners**, such as the United Nations and the Council of Europe to **promote high international standards for victims' rights**, including rights of child victims, victims of terrorism, migrant victims, victims of sexual and gender-based violence, LGBTI+, victims of hate crime, victims of organised crime, victims of environmental crime and victims with disabilities;
- Use **EU funding and political dialogue to promote, advocate and protect victims' rights** and to **ensure access to justice** for victims in partner countries;
- **Promote cooperation** to improve support and protection for EU citizens victimised in third countries.