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Directorate B: Criminal justice
Unit B.2 : Procedural criminal law



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Report from the High-level conference EU Strategy on victims' rights (2020-2025)

On 22 September 2020, European Commission organised together with the German Presidency a High-level conference on the EU Strategy on victims' rights (2020-2025).

The main objectives of the conference were to present and discuss the Strategy, to inaugurate the Victims' Rights Platform and to inform about the appointment of the European Commission Coordinator for victims' rights.

The event gathered about 150 participants, including ministers of justice, members of European Parliament, national experts, representatives of the EU institutions, agencies and bodies and civil society. Most participants took part via the on-line tool (Interactio platform). A small number of Brussels-based participants were present in the Commission premises.

Alexandra Jour-Schroeder, Deputy Director-General of DG Justice (acting) opened the event with a short film about victims' stories. It was followed by speeches of Commissioner Reynders and the German State Secretary Christian Kastrop, representing the German Minister of Justice and Consumers. Other high-level speakers included the Portuguese Minister of Justice Francisca Van Dunem, the Slovenian Minister of Justice Lilijana Kozlovič, the French Minister of Justice Éric Dupond-Moretti and the Chair of the European Parliament Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D), ES. All speakers showed their commitment to the Victims' Rights Strategy, including the presentation of numerous concrete actions on how to advance particular aspects of the strategy.

Panel 1: Empowering victims of crime - support and protection for the most vulnerable victims

Empowering victims of crime so they can report crime, participate in criminal proceedings, claim compensation and ultimately recover – as much as possible – from consequence of crime is one of the two main strands under the Victims' Rights Strategy. It was also the topic of the first panel of the conference. In particular, this panel focused on support and protection to victims of hate crime, victims of terrorism and victims of domestic violence in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.

MEP Magdalena Adamowicz (EPP, PL) opened the panel with a presentation stressing the need to fight hate crime and hate speech as elements of preserving democracy in the European Union. Christian de Valkeneer, Attorney General of Liège, gave a practitioner's

insight to the ways of supporting and protecting victims of hate crime. Professor dr Edgar Franke, German Commissioner on victims' rights shared the German lessons and experience on how to ensure the support and protection to victims of terrorism. Aniella Ferenczi from the European Network on Victims' Rights presented the work of the network on sharing good practices in relation to protection of victims of domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Panel 2: working together on victims' rights - Victims' Rights Platform

The second panel of the conference was dedicated to setting up the Victims' Rights Platform. Katarzyna Janicka-Pawlowska, the recently appointed European Commission Coordinator for victims' rights presented the main aspects of the Victims' Rights Platform, including its composition, organisation and the role of its members.

Dr. Joanna Goodey, the head of Research and Data at the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights spoke about the role of the EU agencies in the platform, taking Fundamental Rights Agency as an example. Levent Altan, Executive Director of Victim Support Europe spoke about the role of civil society in the platform, taking the example of Victim Support Europe.

The event ended with a short exchange of views among the participants and concluding remarks by the European Commission.

The Commission concluded that the event gave a good overview of the large spectrum of the victims' related topics, including support and protection to victims of hate crime, victims of terrorism and victims of domestic violence.

The Commission noted a positive feedback in relation to setting up the Victims' Rights Platform that is expected to give a more horizontal approach to victims' rights and strengthen the cooperation and coordination at the EU level.

The commitments expressed by the present and upcoming presidencies of the European Union and by the European Parliament gave a solid basis to continue the work on implementation of the EU Strategy on victims' rights (2020-2025) at the EU and national level.