

**Victim Support**  
Europe

# LEAVE NO VICTIM BEHIND

**#LeaveNoVictimBehind #EUElections2024**

**VICTIM SUPPORT EUROPE'S MANIFESTO  
FOR THE EU ELECTIONS 2024**

Empowering victims' rights globally  
to achieve a better world for all,  
while advancing the Sustainable Development Goals.



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# 01. MANIFESTO

For over 6 decades the European Union has stood for social justice and fundamental rights. Those principles are increasingly under threat and we must work together to protect them.

**Justice, inclusion and support for all are critical to victims of crime and form part of these fundamental values.**

Victim Support Europe is committed to working with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and to providing recommendations for victim-sensitive approaches to these upcoming challenges

## 1.1 NO VICTIM EXCLUDED

The EU can no longer afford to take piecemeal action on victims' rights. We must pursue laws and policies which benefit all victims of crime, whilst ensuring specialisation and adaptation to specific needs of vulnerable victims. This means acting on cross cutting issues such as access to support and justice systems, compensation, information, and training. It means that the victim's perspective has to be mainstreamed into all EU policies, including ones on specific groups (e.g. persons with disabilities, LGBTI+ rights, etc). It means that the EU must take a leadership role on the global stage, promoting rights and services for all victims of crime, no matter where they are, no matter what the crime is.

All victims, regardless of the crime they have been subjected to, should benefit from a comprehensive and tailored response adapted to their individual needs, which includes the nature and impact of crime and their personal characteristics (age, gender, cultural/religious background, etc). Legislation and policies on law enforcement, counter terrorism, migration, health, education and sustainability have to consider the impact of crime, the effect thereof on victims and society as a whole, and how victims must be treated empathetically and in a trauma-informed manner by professionals in those fields.

## NOR FORGOTTEN

Victims' rights should not be considered as an isolated policy but rather an integrated part of the justice, sustainable development, peace and security and equality agenda. Hearing victims' voices is crucial to achieving these objectives and should be placed at the centre of EU policies and actions in that field. We want to have victims and those supporting victims involved in our meetings and consultations not as an ornament, but as a real voice.

**EQUALLY, THE EU MUST ACT AS  
A GLOBAL LEADER**

**FOR VICTIMS' RIGHTS, SUPPORTING  
COUNTRIES TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION  
OF VICTIMS ACROSS THE WORLD**

# CALL TO ACTION

Victim Support Europe calls on the European Union to establish a clear long-term vision for the development and implementation of victims' rights. A strategic approach which ensures that victims issues are incorporated into wider social and law enforcement policies, should be coupled with complementary co-ordination, national victims' rights strategy, oversight and monitoring mechanisms and bodies at the national level, such as a national victims' rights coordinator, an independent commissioner, working groups, and implementation committees.

**Victims must be at the centre of the EU response to crime, security and justice.**

All EU victims-related legislations and policies, such as the Victims' Rights Directive, Counter-Terrorism Directive and the upcoming Violence against Women Directive, must be as strong and offer a robust foundation for effective and full implementation of victims' rights at Member State level.

A long-term shift in the mentality of practitioners and the general public is needed to improve our response to victimisation as a society and build resilience. This can be achieved through education and awareness raising activities, and the integration of victimisation issues into our education systems. The EU should follow the UN in supporting education for justice for children and adults in primary, secondary and tertiary education.



## 1.2 COMPREHENSIVE

Victims of crime are among the most vulnerable groups in need of support, for all areas of life which might be impacted by crime (such as emotional, legal and practical support, healthcare, social care, etc). Yet, services for victims across sectors have developed and operate in a very fragmented manner, leaving many victims without the support they need. In particular, victim support services, if available, often vary in their quality and accessibility within and between countries. Service delivery failures can leave victims feeling helpless and abandoned, resulting in avoidable economic and social welfare costs.

It is time that the understanding of victim support moves from a niche issue to a cornerstone of resilient societies, and an essential element of our health and justice systems – a bridge between the two –, which operates through comprehensive national support frameworks.

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## SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT

Despite the requirement to establish national generic and specialist support services since 2015, in accordance with the Victims' Rights Directive, many Member States still do not have such services in place, and where they do, services are usually not working well in practice. The EU must act to ensure all Member States establish victim support services operating at the national level, which are effectively accessible, and that the public and victims are informed of these services.

In the next legislative period, the EU must continue to develop policies on the delivery of support services to ensure that victims have access to a full range of basic services including face to face support and national 116 006 helplines, and that minimum quality standards exist to ensure the welfare and safe of victims using those services.

The EU should in addition ensure that all States put in place comprehensive national support frameworks, which ensure that support is delivered by actors operating in unison and in accordance with long-term strategies, therefore guaranteeing a better system to effectively support victims across sectors. Mechanisms such as overview, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and sufficient funding streams should be central to operation of national support frameworks as to ensure a coherent and comprehensive response to crime.

## 1.3 SAFE JUSTICE SYSTEMS

Our justice systems are consistently failing victims from the moment of reporting a crime, throughout investigation, criminal proceedings and outcome thereof. The process of seeking justice should not be so harmful that victims do not come forward, that they drop out of the process or that they experience further harm, which by some is deemed more harmful than the crime itself.

# CALL TO ACTION

The EU must act to ensure that victims are supported and enabled to seek justice, that they are properly protected from secondary victimisation and retaliation, and that empathetic trauma-informed approaches are fully incorporated into basic training and lifelong learning of all those coming into contact with victims.

It is critical that over the next five years, existing European rights for victims in criminal proceedings are fully implemented and operational in practice. This means in particular that victims are supported to meaningfully participate in proceedings and to act on their rights, that victims receive simple and accessible information about their case, that victims are treated respectfully throughout proceedings, that their needs are properly assessed and that protection measures are genuinely provided.

The EU must also look to the future and embrace victim-sensitive justice approach and meaningful participation of victims throughout proceedings by ensuring access to support for victims throughout, in particular accompaniment by a victim support worker and access to court based support services, by improving access to legal assistance and legal aid, by ensuring privacy protection and protection from secondary victimisation and retaliation, also through separate waiting areas in all courts, by improving state compensation and offender compensation systems.

## 1.4 COORDINATED SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNICATION

The EU's current approach to providing information to victims of crime, as mandated by the Victims' Rights Directive, falls short in ensuring that victims can access and understand the information they need to navigate the aftermath of a crime effectively. Victims often face inefficiencies, inconsistencies, and a lack of coordination in information provision, hindering their ability to exercise their rights as victims.

# CALL TO ACTION

To improve this situation, the EU must take the following actions. First, enhance communication methods in practice to ensure that victims not only receive information but can also comprehend and act upon it. This can be achieved through having the adequate tools and mechanisms for victims to access and receive information in a simple and accessible manner (e.g. case management systems), through multiple access points, whilst removing as many limitations as possible.

Second, establish consistency and coordination in information provision to eliminate gaps in availability, duplications and confusion. These changes should occur on both an individual level, focusing on effective communication skills, and a systemic level, through the establishment of a clear cooperative framework. By implementing these measures, the EU can empower victims, prevent secondary victimisation, and enhance their participation in criminal proceedings, aligning with international principles and ensuring better support for crime victims.

## 02. PROPOSALS ON THE ADVANCEMENT OF VICTIM SUPPORT FOLLOWING THE 2024 ELECTIONS

### 2.1 How can the EU make a difference?

The European Union has a real power to change lives for the better, to improve the situation of all victims across the Member States and beyond.

Starting in 2024, the EU must renew its leadership role on victims' issues. It must be coherent and comprehensive in its actions, with a long-term vision for all victims which turns rights into reality, and which looks at future reform to develop new, innovative, and cutting-edge approaches to victim protection, support and justice.

# TO ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES, THE EU MUST

1) Enforce existing European laws in Member States and ensure adoption of robust victims' legislation. The EU must take a leadership role to ensure that all victims' rights become a reality across EU Member States .

2) Develop sufficient and coherent EU funding to support the implementation of rights and services. The widest possible range of EU funding programmes should incorporate victim priorities. Rules should be adapted to maximise access to frontline organisations, universities and state entities so they can work together to deliver activities which have the greatest impact on victims lives.

3) Support partnerships and support coordination across policies, European bodies, between States, NGOs, practitioners and victims themselves. Crime affects all aspects of a person's life. It affects our communities and our economies. Actions to prevent crime and to help victims will only be fully affective where they are coordinated across all fields. The EU must develop actions which cut across traditional boundaries, which bring diverse actors together and support joint working on the ground. Coordinating bodies, networks and mechanisms should be developed to support specific victims policies.

4) Deepen and broaden knowledge through data collection and research. The victims' field suffers from a significant lack of data and long-term research. 'We don't have the data' has become an excuse for inaction. The EU, in particular through Eurostat, must work with States to ensure data on victims and in the justice field is collected and analysed. Long-term research projects bringing together practitioners and research institutes should be supported to understand the impact of crime, policies and new actions.

5) Directly support capacity building of individuals, organisations, and State authorities to better deliver high quality services and rights in a victim sensitive manner. Through its unique position, the EU bring together European and international best practices and directly support knowledge exchange, education and training.



# 2.2

# WHAT CAN

## MEMBERS OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS DO FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME?

Kindly request members of your national government to endorse an online petition available on Victim Support Europe's website ([LINK](#)).



How well are we doing for victims across the EU and do the EU Victims' laws work in practice?

Our BENEVICT project, spanning 26 EU countries, reveals tough challenges in implementing the Victims' Rights Directive a decade after its establishment.

Victims of crime need support – emotional, practical, legal and more. This not only helps them recover but also helps them participate in the justice system – addressing their own needs and supporting wider rule of law goals.

Currently sufficient services do not exist, are not practical or are not effectively co-ordinated across a country and with law enforcement. A strategic approach is required as set forth in VSE's national victim support framework policy paper to ensure these services and authorities who are in contact with victims – such as law enforcement authorities and justice professionals – are equipped with the right tools.



## WE CALL YOU

### TO COMMIT TO ENSURE THAT:

**Victims are included and at the centre of the EU response to crime, security and justice;**

Victims are effectively and adequately supported, by ensuring that Member States put in place national frameworks for comprehensive support and safe justice systems;

All EU victims-related legislations and policies, such as the revised Victims' Rights, European Protection Order, Countering Terrorism and the Violence against Women Directives, are as strong and comprehensive as possible, and that Member States effectively implement them.



# 03. USING THE 2030 UN SDGs AGENDA FRAMEWORK TO ADVANCE VICTIMS' RIGHTS

Victim Support Europe (VSE) is the leading European umbrella organisation advocating on behalf of all victims of crime, no matter what the crime, no matter who the victim.

Since its foundation in 1990, VSE has worked on behalf of European – and global – victims of crime and terrorism, to ensure their rights are upheld and that they have access to support services, whether they report a crime or not. We work towards this mission through advocacy to improve European and international laws, through research and knowledge development, and through capacity building at the national and local levels.

**78**  
MEMBERS

PROVIDING SUPPORT TO OVER  
**3 MILLION**  
VICTIMS

IN  
**36**  
COUNTRIES

VSE represents 78 member organisations, annually providing support and information to more than 3 million people affected by crime in 36 countries. Crime affects both individuals and society, and impacts economic productivity. Every year, some 15% of the European Union's population – around 75 million individuals – experience serious victimisation, which can broadly be defined as experiencing unjust or unfair treatment, following a crime. Have you considered how this impacts our pursuit of sustainable development?

The UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development pledges 'that no one will be left behind'<sup>1</sup>; despite this, victims of crime are often forgotten when sustainable development initiatives are discussed. While victims continue to be excluded or forgotten, sustainability goals will remain unachieved as victims evince lower resilience levels, and poorer health and recovery rates than other members of society.

**EVERY YEAR,**  
**15% OF**  
THE EU'S POPULATION  
EXPERIENCE SERIOUS  
VICTIMISATION

If a victim experiences a lack of respect and recognition from 'the authorities' – medical staff, judicial and law enforcement officials, or even employers – they can suffer from secondary victimisation. If a victim lacks economic or social standing, they may experience discrimination. If the delivery of support by victims' services is inefficient or uncoordinated, victims cannot recover their resilience or their health whether or not they are able to access such services directly. If a victim is unable to return to work following a crime, they may incur unforeseen and unaffordable expenses which can force them into a state of poverty.

<sup>1</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

**POVERTY  
AND SOCIAL  
INEQUALITY  
WILL NEVER  
BE TRULY  
ERADICATED  
UNTIL THE  
ISSUE OF  
COMPREHENSIVE  
VICTIM SUPPORT  
IS DIRECTLY  
ADDRESSED**

**WE BELIEVE THIS  
IS UNACCEPTABLE.**

**WE ARE CALLING FOR GOVERNMENTS AND DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATIONS ACROSS THE GLOBE TO ENSURE THAT THEY ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES FACING VICTIMS OF CRIME WHEN THEY RESPOND TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS). ONLY BY DOING THIS, CAN WE ACHIEVE 2030 AGENDA'S MISSION OF 'A JUST, EQUITABLE, TOLERANT, OPEN AND SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE WORLD IN WHICH THE NEEDS OF THE MOST VULNERABLE ARE MET'2.**

**THIS DOCUMENT DEMONSTRATES HOW THE INCLUSION OF VICTIMS MAY BE ACHIEVED; IT LOOKS AT 7 OF THE 2030 AGENDA GOALS AND HIGHLIGHTS THE CHALLENGES FACED BY VICTIMS. IT OFFERS PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO POLICYMAKERS AND ORGANISATIONS WORKING ON VARIOUS DEVELOPMENT ISSUES. WHETHER AN ACTIVIST OR WORKING IN CIVIL SOCIETY, BY USING THE 2030 AGENDA AS A TOOL, OUR ADVICE ON HOW TO INCLUDE VICTIMS OF CRIME WITHIN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TOPICS MAY BE USEFUL TO YOU.**

# 7 SDGs AND VICTIM SUPPORT:

## How does victim support relate to sustainable development goals?

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, is ‘a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity’<sup>3</sup>. However, the goals have neither focused on victims of crime nor the implementation of their rights.

We have mapped (see ‘Mapping SDGs and victim support’ table) the relevance of victimisation to each of the above-mentioned goals; for example, how exposure to child abuse affects health and educational outcomes, and how this impacts equality and the achievement of decent standards of living. An act of victimisation has life-long consequences that affect many areas of personal and societal life.

Our objective is to demonstrate that victim support may contribute to the achievement of individual targets, by the fulfilment of relevant indicators. For example, we note that Goal 16’s target of “effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels”, as measured by the proportion of the population satisfied with their last experience of public services, supports a number of other targets (including those under Goals 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10).<sup>4</sup>

The 17 SDGs form a complex interconnected network of objectives, and we believe that 7 align with the topic of victim support. Therefore, providing assistance to those affected crime is a vital part of this complex network. The seven relevant SDGs are:



<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

# THUS, “PEACE, JUSTICE AND EFFECTIVE INSTITUTIONS SUMMARISES THE GOAL AND, IN THAT CONTEXT, VICTIM SUPPORT CAN BE IDENTIFIED AS A PUBLIC SERVICE

Furthermore, appreciation of victim support as a response to secondary victimisation – which demonstrates institutional failure to respond appropriately to primary victimisation – highlights its importance within the architecture of the SDGs.

To better understand how victim support may help to achieve specific goals, we can use an approach (known as Systems Thinking<sup>5</sup>) to create a map showing how different SDGs are connected, and whether they're affected by the availability of victim support. Each connection, and its relationship to victim support, is a point on the map. In simpler terms, by mapping these connections, we can evaluate how – and to what extent – victim support impacts the achievement of a goal. It should be noted that changing circumstances may affect how the connections work together.

Policy coherence, ensuring that a variety of policies related to different fields work together as discussed in Target 17.14, offers us alternative way of looking at victim support in relation to the SDGs. Policy coherence may be achieved in several ways; for example, establishing victim support as a national policy can (in)directly assist other policies to achieve national targets.

However, studies demonstrate that a country's income level is a good indicator of governmental competence. So, making policies work together not only depends on a country's leaders but also on how well they implement the policies.

## 1 NO POVERTY



Better recovery from victimisation improves work/ life outcomes; the poor are amongst the most vulnerable to crime and its impact.

## 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Addressing the psychological as well as the physical impacts of crime on (direct and indirect) victims improves health outcomes, while focusing on resilience and recovery improves overall public health.

## 4 QUALITY EDUCATION



Victimisation significantly impacts educational outcomes. However, life-long education (from primary school to third age) can address crime-related gender issues and their impact.

## 5 GENDER EQUALITY



Inequality is at the core of gender-based violence. Individualised responses, which reflect gender issues such as the varying needs of female victims in court, are required.

## 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



Private sector must play a role in developing solutions for victims of crime, especially of gender-based violence, by ensuring a safe victim-orientated workplace free from harassment etc. (able to identify and respond to staff who become victims). Private sector employees can identify criminality (hotel staff trained to identify trafficking, etc.).

## 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



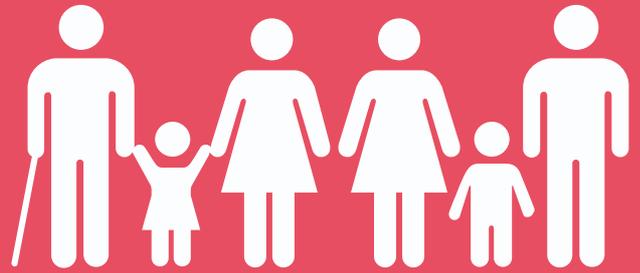
The impact of crime affects communities whose members suffer from inequality; victim support ensures inclusive responses to their victimisation.

## 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



Build resilient victim-centric communities, ensure all victims have access to formal and informal justice systems, educate staff in all victim-facing institutions to improve their interaction with victims.

# 1 NO POVERTY



Eradicating poverty in all its forms remains one of the greatest challenges facing humanity and is the chief principle of SDG 1. SDG 1 focuses on ending poverty by ensuring access to basic resources and establishing social protection systems, and by building the resilience of the vulnerable.

Victim support plays a crucial role in achieving SDG 1; a strong and comprehensive victim support system contributes to better recovery outcomes for individuals who have experienced crime or other traumatic events. Improved recovery translates into enhanced work and life outcomes, vital to the eradication of poverty.

The poor are disproportionately affected by crime and its impact due to their vulnerability and lack of resilience. They often lack the resources to prevent victimisation or access quality healthcare and psychological support following a crime. Thus, the physical and psychological consequences of victimisation may hinder their ability to accumulate knowledge and engage in productive activities; perpetuating their life of poverty.

By strengthening the support offered by victims' services (counselling, medical assistance, legal aid, social reintegration programmes, etc.), impoverished individuals may have better recovery outcomes. This then improves their mental and physical well-being, allowing them to (re)join the workforce and contribute to economic (and social) activities. When victims can recover from the effects of crime and successfully integrate into society, they have a higher chance of escaping poverty.

A comprehensive victim support system can also help reduce the prevalence of victimisation in impoverished communities, leading to more resilient community members and – ideally – less criminal activity. Safer environments foster economic development and growth, creating more employment opportunities which offer the means to break free from the cycle of poverty.

In conclusion, victim support is intricately linked to SDG 1 as it addresses the profound impact of crime on vulnerable populations.

**By facilitating physical and psychological recovery, enhancing resilience, and improving victims' work and life outcomes, we empower the impoverished with the means to overcome victimisation; thus, contributing to the goal of ending poverty in all its forms everywhere.**

# 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

SDG 3 aspires to ensure the health and well-being of all persons, and includes a bold commitment to end AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other communicable disease epidemics by 2030. It also aims to achieve universal health coverage, and to provide access to safe and effective medicines and vaccines for all.

Victim support is intricately linked to the achievement of SDG 3. By addressing the psychological impact of crime on those directly and indirectly affected by it, support offered by organisations working with victims contributes significantly to improved health outcomes.

Long-term psychological problems, resulting from trauma, anxiety and stress, can often be experienced by victims of crime. These problems can be mitigated by providing specialised counselling and mental health services through victim support programmes; thus, promoting psychological well-being. This not only benefits individual victims but also contributes to the overall mental health of society, fostering a healthier and more resilient population.

Furthermore, direct action on building resilience and facilitating recovery through victim support initiatives has a ripple effect on the broader health of society. When individuals are supported and guided through the process of recovery, they are more likely to regain a sense of normalcy and well-being. This, in turn, reduces the burden on healthcare systems by preventing the development or exacerbation of mental health disorders and related physical health issues.



By recognising how mental health connects with societal well-being, victim support is thus pivotal to achieving SDG 3. Victim support programmes, which address the psychological impact of crime and promote resilience, not only improve the lives of individual victims but also contribute to a healthier and more prosperous society.

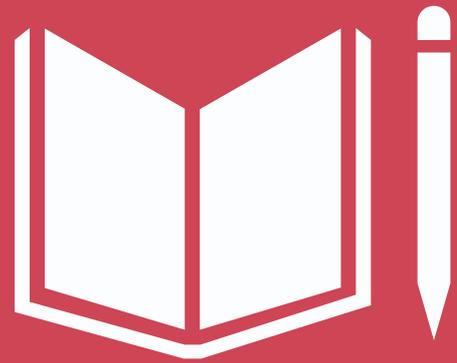
# 4 QUALITY EDUCATION

Victim support underpins the achievement of SDG 4. Educational outcomes are significantly impacted by victimisation, and comprehensive victim support programmes play a pivotal role in addressing this challenge.

Crime and victimisation can disrupt a person's access to education, leading to absenteeism, decreased academic performance, and even lead to students dropping out of school or further education. By providing specialised support, including counselling and resources to manage the psychological aftermath of crime, victims can be helped to overcome barriers and to continue with their education.

Victim support initiatives offer a unique opportunity to address gender issues in the context of criminal acts. Women and girls are often disproportionately affected by certain types of crime, such as domestic violence, human trafficking, and sexual assault. By promoting the integration of topics on gender-based violence, consent, and healthy relationships into all educational curricula, victim support efforts contribute to fostering a more gender-equitable society.

From primary school to life-long learning, education offers a platform where awareness about crime prevention, victim empowerment, and resilience building can be raised. By integrating victim support concepts within educational programmes, we can empower individuals with the knowledge and skills to prevent victimisation and to respond effectively if they or someone they know becomes a victim.



Victim support addresses the impact of victimisation on educational outcomes, and thus, is key to fully achieving SDG 4. By providing victims with comprehensive support and integrating crime prevention and gender equity into educational programmes, victim support efforts contribute to the creation of an inclusive and equitable education system that promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all.

# 5 GENDER EQUALITY



Victim support is a critical driver to achieving SDG 5. Gender-based violence is a core challenge to this endeavour, and victim support programmes play a vital role in addressing the issue.

Gender-based violence disproportionately affects women and girls, perpetuating gender inequality, and hindering their empowerment. Victim support initiatives offer survivors a safe inclusive space where they can seek healing, resilience, and justice; initiatives that encourage victims to break free from the cycle of violence and reclaim equality and empowerment.

Importantly, victim support recognises the individualised responses required to address gender issues effectively. Women and girls have unique needs when dealing with the aftermath of violence. Tailoring support services to meet these specific needs, such as providing trauma-informed care and legal assistance that considers the different experiences of female victims, empowers them to navigate the complex legal and emotional landscape more effectively.

Furthermore, victim support programmes contribute, through education, to changing societal norms and attitudes by raising awareness about gender-based violence and its impact. Education helps us challenge harmful stereotypes and behaviours, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society where women and girls are empowered to live free from violence and discrimination.

Therefore, victim support is instrumental in achieving SDG 5 by addressing issues of gender-based violence and by providing gender-sensitive responses. Through tailored services and awareness-building efforts, victim support programmes contribute to the empowerment of women and girls, fostering a more just and equal society for all.

# 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



Victim support significantly contributes to the achievement of SDG 8. While the private sector has a crucial role in this endeavour, victim support organisations can assist employers by developing solutions that aid victims of crime, particularly those affected by gender-based violence, which, in turn, fosters safety and inclusivity in the workplace.

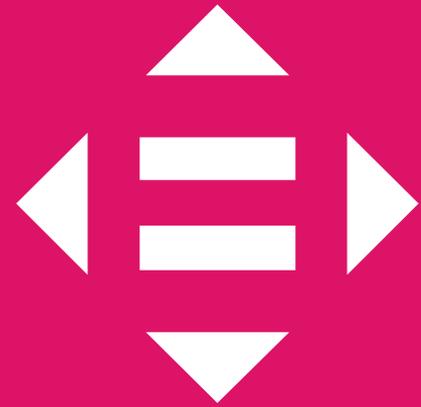
Creating a victim-oriented workplace is pivotal to SDG 8. By recognising and responding effectively to the needs of victims, including those of gender-based violence, businesses create an environment where employees feel supported, respected, and empowered. This enhances employees overall well-being and productivity while employers promote decent work conditions.

The private sector can play an active role in addressing victimisation by ensuring employee safety within the workplace. Implementing anti-harassment policies, providing staff with training to identify and address abusive behaviours, and offering accessible and responsive reporting channels contribute to a thriving fear-free work environment.

Moreover, such businesses are more able to identify criminality and contribute to crime prevention. For example, in sectors such as hospitality, training staff to recognise signs of human trafficking not only aligns with SDG 8 but also helps combat criminal activities. This underscores the private sector's responsibility for upholding societal well-being.

Integration of victim support within the private sector aligns with SDG 8 by creating victim-oriented workplaces, addressing gender-based violence, and participating in crime prevention efforts. These actions not only promote economic growth and support resilience but also foster an inclusive and secure environment for all workers.

# 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



The role played by victim support is pivotal to achieving SDG 10: Reduce Inequality Within and Among Countries. Crime impacts different communities in a variety of ways, and comprehensive victim support efforts ensure that responses to all victims of crime are inclusive and equitable.

Marginalised communities, such as those with lower socio-economic status or hosting minority groups, are often disproportionately affected by crime and victimisation. By tailoring victim support programmes to address the specific needs of these communities, we can bridge any gaps that prevent access to resources and assistance, thus reducing those inequalities exacerbated by crime.

Victim support initiatives also contribute to breaking the cycle of inequality perpetuated by crime. By providing individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds with the tools that they can use to recover and regain control of their lives, we empower them to overcome the setbacks caused by victimisation; ideally, interrupting the cycle of poverty and disadvantage.

Furthermore, by acknowledging and addressing the unique challenges faced by different communities, victim support efforts contribute to fostering understanding, empathy, and social cohesion. This can lead to greater awareness of the structural factors that contribute to crime and inequality, encouraging collective action to address these underlying issues.

Victim support, which ensures responses to victims of crime are inclusive and promote equality across a country's population, is intrinsic to the achievement of SDG 10. By offering tailored assistance, victim support contributes to reducing inequalities exacerbated by victimisation, fostering empowerment, and promoting social cohesion.

# 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



Victim support provides an essential strategy to achieving SDG 16. Initiatives contribute to both formal and informal justice mechanisms, community building, and the improvement of victim-focused institutions.

Formal justice systems often struggle to address the complex needs of victims. By supplying specialised victim support services, such as legal aid, counselling, and assistance in navigating legal processes, we enhance victims' access to justice. The credibility of legal systems is strengthened and a sense of trust in institutions is fostered, which in turn promote peaceful and inclusive societies.

In addition to formal justice systems, victim support efforts contribute to informal mechanisms within their communities. By creating safe spaces for dialogue and resolution, victim support programmes empower community members to address disputes and conflicts in a way that reflects their values and needs, thus contributing to local peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts.

By promoting victim support, more victim-focused institutions can be established. By integrating victim needs when designing institutions, policies, and programmes, we can create more accountable and responsive systems that ensure safe justice for all victims of all crimes. By fostering greater trust in institutions of authority, we can contribute to a more inclusive society.

To conclude, victim support improves access to justice, builds communities through conflict resolution, and enhances victim-focused institutions and is therefore at the heart of SDG 16. Victim support initiatives contribute to the development of peaceful, inclusive societies with effective and accountable institutions that work towards sustainable development at all levels

## 3.1 PRACTICAL EXAMPLES OF USING THE 2030 AGENDA FRAMEWORK TO ADVANCE VICTIMS' RIGHTS

In the dynamic landscape of pre-election campaigns, this guide might serve as a valuable resource to enhance your understanding and integration of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into your campaign agenda. While you may already be familiar with certain aspects, our suggestions aim to provide additional insights that could prove beneficial to your elections campaign strategy.

Notably, this guide sheds light on a crucial aspect often confined to the justice section in political manifestos — the issues faced by victims. Recognizing the interconnected nature of these challenges with various SDGs, we offer practical recommendations on how to seamlessly incorporate victims' concerns across diverse sections of the parties' manifestos.

# ACTIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS & PRACTITIONERS

To fully live up to the commitment to leave no-one behind, politicians, policymakers and practitioners must act now! VSE advances the following recommendations:



# 1 NO POVERTY



## **Integration of Victim Support in Poverty Reduction Programmes:**

Ensure that victims of crime can access resources that prevent them from falling further into poverty. Collaborate with victim support organisations to integrate their services within poverty reduction programmes.

## **Coordination with Social Welfare Agencies:**

Establish coordination mechanisms between victim support agencies and social welfare departments to ensure victims have seamless access to financial and social assistance.

# 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



## **Direct Action on Resilience and Recovery:**

Encourage the establishment and development of victim support services in Member States to ensure all victims of crime have full access to such services. Allocate specific funding to set up and run 116 006 victim helplines in all EU Member States

## **Incorporate Trauma-Informed Care:**

Ensure that all Member State healthcare systems provide victims of crime with trauma-informed care which recognises the mental and emotional impact of victimisation.

## **Empower Victims:**

Improve the safety and resilience of victims of crime, professionals, and the general population; raise awareness of victimisation. Ensure victims have full access to high quality generic and specialist victim support services. Develop tools that connect victims to the services they need. Promote cooperation between State and civil society actors; reduce the risk of excluding civil society from the delivery of victims' rights and services

# 4 QUALITY EDUCATION



## **School-based Support Programs:**

Develop programmes that provide counselling and support for school-age and young victims of crime to enable them to continue their education and minimise its disruption.

## **Teacher Training:**

Train educators to recognise the signs of victimisation and provide appropriate support to affected students, to ensure their emotional well-being in the learning environment.

## **Inclusion of Victim Support in Curricula (from primary school to university, within vocational training and lifelong learning):**

Collaborate with State education ministries to include information on victim support, crime prevention, and gender equality in curricula at all levels. Curricula at the (law, medical, teaching, etc.) degree level should be developed to include victims' issues and victimisation, for professionals likely to come into contact with victims.

# 5 GENDER EQUALITY



## **Law Enforcement Training:**

Collaborate with law enforcement agencies to provide training on the sensitive and effective handling of gender-based violence cases.

## **Engagement with Corporate Entities:**

Work with businesses to establish policies that address workplace harassment and violence, ensure a safe and supportive environment for women employees.

## **Meet the Needs of Specific Victim Groups:**

Ensure there is a balance between prioritising vulnerable victims and acting for wider groups of victims. Ensure that professionals can identify and communicate with specific groups of victims in accordance with their needs. Address barriers faced by different groups of victims in accessing justice and other services. Collect data on specific groups to understand their experiences, challenges, and best practices. Ensure coordination between the Gender Equality Strategy and the EU Victims' Rights Strategy.

# 8

# DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



## **Private Sector Collaboration:**

Partner with businesses to develop workplace policies addressing victim support, including resources for employees affected by crime and harassment.

## **Public-Private Initiatives:**

Establish public-private initiatives that incentivise companies to invest in victim support services and contribute to reducing inequalities.

## **Employment Reintegration Programs:**

Create programmes that facilitate the reintegration of victims into the workforce, provide skill-building opportunities and job placement support.

# 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



## **Community-based Outreach:**

Develop community-centred victim support initiatives that specifically target marginalised groups and reduce inequalities in access to support.

## **Legal Aid Services:**

Collaborate with legal aid organisations to ensure that victims, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have access to legal assistance

## **Inclusive Advocacy:**

Advocate for policy changes that prioritise victim support within a framework of social justice, addressing the specific needs of marginalised communities.

# 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



## **Ensure the Full Implementation and Evaluation of Relevant EU Laws:**

Promote and carry out activities that support the implementation of EU laws

## **Strengthen Cooperation and Coordination:**

Ensure victims' issues are included within existing coordination mechanisms between all EU institutional actors or develop new mechanisms where appropriate. Develop tools to improve cross-border exchanges of information and co-operation on individual cases. Encourage and support cooperation between State authorities and civil society to deliver services in unison. Establish a regular EU Summit on issues relevant to all victims of crime.

## **Enhance Justice and Compensation for Victims:**

Support effective and safe access to justice for all victims of crime, irrespective of nationality or residence status. Prioritise the problem of unreported crime. Encourage a victim-centric approach in all criminal, civil and administrative proceedings through accessibility, communication, respectful treatment, and protection. Develop high quality alternatives to formal justice whilst minimising the risk to victims. Examine minimum standards and evaluate EU legislation on protection orders. Ensure accessibility to national compensation schemes and compensation in cross-border cases

## 3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIVISTS

The 2030 Agenda provides a strategic framework for activists advocating on behalf of the rights and needs of victims of crime. Below is advice on engaging with government agencies and non-governmental organisations to promote victim support and its inclusion within the SDGs.

# LEVERAGE EXISTING NATIONAL PLANS

Investigate whether your country has a national plan for implementing the SDGs. Utilise this as a platform to engage decision-makers in discussions about the importance of victim support and its inclusion in the 2030 Agenda. Highlight the role victim support plays in achieving multiple SDGs, emphasising its impact on poverty reduction, equality, and justice.

# FORGE STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

Collaborate with a diverse range of organisations that share your interest in justice, human rights, and social equality. Seek allies who approach issues from different angles, form broad coalitions that can collectively advocate for victim-centred policies. Establish partnerships with well-respected organisations, such as those accredited by ECOSOC, to gain access to international platforms such as UN events and conferences, where victim support can be championed.



# RAISE AWARENESS BY GENERATING DATA AND RESEARCH

Produce comprehensive data, research studies, and reports that highlight the challenges faced by victims of crime. Use data to illustrate the impact of victimisation on individuals' lives and on society as a whole. Present your findings using inclusive and accessible language that resonates with a wide audience, make your case for implementing effective victim support services.

# ENGAGE IN PARTICIPATORY CONSULTATIONS

Advocate for participatory consultations involving victims' rights advocates, survivors, and victim support organisations when governments look to develop justice, social service, and equality policies. Ensure that the voices and perspectives of those directly affected by crime are integrated into decision-making processes.



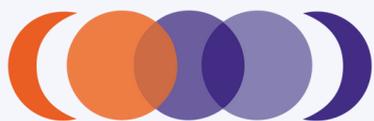
# INFLUENCE POLICY DIALOGUE AND DEBATES

Actively participate in policy dialogues, public forums, and debates related to justice, human rights, and development. Use these platforms to advocate for the integration of victim support measures within SDG implementation strategies. Present compelling arguments as to how a robust victim support service contributes to the achievement of a range of SDGs.

# BUILD PUBLIC SUPPORT THROUGH CAMPAIGNS

Launch awareness-raising campaigns to engage the general public and garner support for victims' rights. Develop educational materials, videos, and community events that promote an understanding of the impact of victimisation and the importance of comprehensive support services. Mobilise grassroots support to pressure decision-makers to prioritise victim support in their agendas.

By strategically employing these actions within the framework of the 2030 Agenda, activists can drive the advancement of victim support and advocate for policies that foster inclusivity, justice, and equality for all victims of crime.



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