



Victims' Rights: New Strategy to empower victims

Brussels, 24 June 2020

The European Commission presented today its first ever EU Strategy on victims' rights to ensure that all victims of crime can fully rely on their rights, no matter where in the EU the crime took place.

The strategy sets a number of actions for the next five years, focusing on two objectives: first, to empower victims to report crime, claim compensation and ultimately recover from consequences of crime; second, to work together with all relevant actors for victims' rights. In view of the recent outbreak of COVID-19 and subsequent lockdown measures, which had an impact on a rise in domestic violence, child sexual abuse, cybercrime and racist and xenophobic hate crime, it is particularly important that the framework for support and protection of victims is also resilient in crisis situations.

Vice-President for Values and Transparency, Věra **Jourová** said: *"Too many victims of crime are left unheard without access to justice and proper support. The European Union is on the side of the victims and today's strategy aims at empowering victims, especially the most vulnerable such as victims of gender-based violence or hate crime. We need to mobilise Member States to fully implement EU rules on victims' rights – no ifs, no buts."*

Commissioner for Justice, Didier **Reynders** said: *"A Union of equality that protects its citizens must ensure the necessary support, protection and non-discriminatory access to justice to all victims of crime. This is what we will strive to achieve thanks to the new strategy, by working together with Member States and civil society."*

The EU has already a solid set of rules to ensure victims' rights. Yet, victims of crime still cannot fully rely on their rights provided by the EU. The starting point must be better application of EU rules in practice. Where appropriate, the Commission will table by 2022 proposals to further strengthen those rules. The new Strategy presented today sets out a number of actions centred around five key priorities:

1. **Effective communicating with victims and providing for safe environment for victims to report crime**

Too often victims are not aware of their rights or are afraid to report the crime for fear of the offender or negative consequences. The Commission, among others, will launch an **EU campaign to raise awareness about victims' rights** and promote specialist support and protection for the victims with specific needs. The Commission will also continue to monitor the **implementation of the relevant EU rules**, including the provisions of the Victims' Rights Directive.

2. **Improving protection and support of the most vulnerable victims**

All victims are vulnerable and some in particular: children, elderly, victims of gender-based violence, domestic violence, racist or homophobic hate crime, victims of terrorism as well as victims with disabilities. The Commission will consider further strengthening of victims' protection by introducing **minimum standards on victims' physical protection**. Member States should set up specialist support services for the most vulnerable victims, including **Child Houses, Family Houses, LGBTI+ safe houses**.

3. **Facilitating victims' access to compensation**

In many Member States, victims' access to compensation is difficult. Under the Strategy, the Commission will monitor and assess the [EU legislation on compensation](#), including state compensation and the [Framework Decision on mutual recognition of financial penalties](#). If necessary, the Commission will propose measures to complement this framework by 2022.

4. **Strengthening cooperation and coordination among actors on victims' rights**

To ensure a more horizontal approach to victims' rights at the EU level, the Commission will set up a

Victims' Rights Platform, bringing together all relevant actors. At the national level, Member States should set up **national victims' rights strategies**. A Commission **Victims' Rights' Coordinator** will also ensure consistency and effectiveness of different actions in relation to the victims' rights policy.

5. Strengthening the international dimension of victims' rights

The recently adopted [Action Plan on human rights and democracy](#) reaffirms the EU's commitment to promoting, protecting and fulfilling human rights worldwide. The EU and its Member States will continue to engage with and within the **United Nations and the Council of Europe** to promote EU victims' rights in partner countries and to exchange best practices. The EU will continue to work closely with the **candidate and potential candidate countries** to strengthen victim's rights as well as support capacity building actions for priority partner countries in relation to **support for victims of terrorism**.

Background

Every year millions of people in the European Union become victims of crime. In 2017, around 15 million people were victims of serious offences, such as homicide, child sexual abuse or kidnapping. The scale of gender-based violence in the EU is alarming: 1 in 3 women (33 %) has experienced physical and/or sexual violence since she was 15 years old. Only about one third of women, who are physically or sexually abused, mostly by their partners or close relatives, contact the authorities. The lockdown of society during the COVID-19 pandemic saw a rise in domestic violence, child sexual abuse and cybercrime, as well as racist and xenophobic hate crime.

Even though the EU has a solid set of rules in place, these instruments have not yet reached their full potential. This is mostly because of the incomplete transposition and/or incorrect implementation of the EU rules into national legal orders. The Commission will continue to assess EU instruments and their possible shortcomings and, where necessary come forward with legislative proposals by 2022 to further strengthen victims' rights.

The implementation of this strategy will be regularly monitored, including through regular meetings of the Victims' Rights Platform to update on actions under the responsibility of different actors. In addition, the Commission will take stock of the strategy's actions at the mid-term of this strategy and update it where necessary.

For more information

- [Victims' Rights Strategy](#)
- [Questions & Answers – Victims' Rights: New Strategy to empower victims](#)
- [Factsheet on the Victims' Rights Strategy: key actions](#)
- [Victims' Rights Directive](#)
- [Centre of Expertise for Victims of Terrorism](#)

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