

Victim Support Leaders Perspective

Before you can develop a perspective (= a look into the future) you first to assess what you have got, your strengths and weaknesses.

What have we got at WEISSER RING Germany and what are our unique features?

I will concentrate on 3 main issues.

- We are the only **generic victim support** organisation in Germany which covers the whole country in more than 420 local branches. We support victims of all intentional crimes.
 - That means victims can get service wherever in Germany they live.
 - We support victims of all sorts of crime. The victim does not have to search for a specific specialised organisation. Finding help is easy.
 - That is probably why WR is running the 116 006 number with great success and increasing numbers of calls.
 - Disadvantage? With so many people working as supporters the quality sometimes differs.

- We **are financed** by fees, donations, inheritance ... That means there is no state funding and we do not have to complain about reduction of governmental funding.
 - Consequently we are totally independent. This gives us a great freedom in what we do and how we promote victims rights. Up to now this way of financing works well.
 - We are able to give financial support if needed.
 - Directly as money or other goods.
 - Indirectly by vouchers for legal advice and representation, or psychological help.
 - You may take it at the same time for a disadvantage that the state has no direct influence. That makes trust and contracts more difficult. The public sector might not like that, when at the same time the directive asks him to be responsible for the implementation of victim services.

- The support work is done and run by **volunteers**. We work with trained professional volunteers. Our local offices/branches are organized and run by volunteers. I for example have in my branch 10 volunteers of different social background, different education and different age different sex ...
 - This gives great flexibility in choosing the right supporter.
 - Flexibility in times, in working hours,
 - This often is for the victim a relieve. There is not another official whose profession it is to help, but just a human being listening, helping and supporting. A human being acting as a navigator through the system.
 - As a disadvantage some people see a lack of professionalism. This can only be rectified by a good training.

Perspective

Coming from this situation we can analyse the perspective:

- We will try to keep and improve service all over the country.
 - We will have to discuss the restriction to victims of intentional crimes. The situation is quite similar. The restriction had historical backgrounds.
 - We will try to promote our helpline more and more as we have more trained volunteers. This helpline gives information about generic and specialised services.
- Financing.
 - We are not interested in state funding as a percentage of our budget. But financing special services or projects might be an option.
 - We will stick to material help for victims where the state does not cover it.
- Volunteers
 - Under the directive we have the freedom to work with volunteers. And we will continue. We will have to promote our model also in Germany by working together with all relevant stakeholders and by networking. I believe there is room for improvement.
 - Most important is the training of our supporters. We developed a large system of seminars. In the beginning of WEISSER RING victims from minor crimes approached us much more than nowadays. Therefore we have to train our

volunteers more and more for specialised services. It will not be easy to have these specialised supporters in all local branches. A system of cooperation might be needed.

- Training on a regular basis must become an obligation for supporters. We are just starting to implement this.

▪ **Conclusion**

Our main tasks will be:

- keeping up and improving the quality of our services
- improve the acceptance of voluntary work by showing the advantages
- stay independent as an advocate for victims rights
- improve cooperation with other victim support organisations. We have talks with certain organisation like women's shelters and so on. But there is still a lot do.
- improve cooperation with the public sector. That might under the directive mean to develop standards for accepted victim support organisations, but will probably also mean contracts. This model works in other fields, f.e. read cross.
- Helping implementing the Directive.

I believe we can tackle these challenges and I look much more positive into the future of WEISSER RING than some years before.

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