

VSE STAFF EXCHANGE

Date: November 9th and 10th, 2023

Introduction

On November 9th and 10th, 2023, Victim Support Europe (VSE) organised a Staff Exchange in Paris, hosted by [France Victimes](#). The staff exchange concentrated on giving participants the chance to share best practices in victim assessment, focusing on needs assessment, referral and information provision.

The programme offered an exceptional chance for employees of different member organisations of VSE to connect. This event favours the sharing of best practices and insights, fostering peer learning. By facilitating collaboration among our members, we promote partnerships in victim support and enhance comprehension of how victim support services operate across various regions of Europe.



France Victimes' Staff Exchange

i. Programme

The staff exchange took place at the headquarters of France Victimes, in Paris.

The event was attended by eight victim support workers from seven different organisations: [Victim Support Malta](#), [Victim Support Northern Ireland](#), [APAV](#), [Victims and Witness Support Service Croatia](#), [Slachtofferhulp Nederlands](#), [Skalbes](#), and [ATENIN](#).

During the first day, the participants were introduced to the history and work of the France Victimes, and the mission of promoting and developing support for victims and other methods to improve victim recognition, such as restorative justice. During the first day a discussion regarding the 116 006 helpline was held, explaining the objective of this helpline. Participants had the opportunity to also share information regarding existing helplines in their countries and what can be done to make these systems better known to laypeople.

The “one-stop shops” project, currently ongoing at the Délégation Interministérielle à l’Aide aux Victimes (DIAV), was reviewed. The participants explained whether collaborative work between ministries, similar to the DIAV, existed in their countries, and presented their issues in creating networks of professionals. The representative of the Ministry of Justice also mentioned their work with protection devices for victims of domestic violence, expressing the positives and negatives of the various methods (electronic geolocation bracelets for aggressors and telephone devices for victims).

The second day of the event was hosted at the Victim Support Office of the [Judicial Tribunal of Créteil](#), where the participants and France Victimes met with the victim support association [Association de Politique Criminelle Appliquée et de Reinsertion Social \(APCARS\)](#).



APCARS explained the focus of their work, namely to favour criminal mediation, seeking friendly agreements between the author and the victim of a crime, and conduct subsequent follow-up to



ensure compliance with the commitments made. This practice has proven to be particularly effective in cases of domestic violence under certain conditions, such as the absence of the aggressor's dominance over the victim. The relevance of this programme to the victim lies in its positive impact in preventing recidivism by addressing the underlying causes of criminal behaviour, ultimately contributing to greater safety and well-being for the victims.

ii. Feedback

The feedback we received from participants was overall very positive. The experience was considered by many a great opportunity to learn new practices, connect with like-minded individuals, and reveal insights into what can be done to improve support for victims. Please find below the feedback quotes from each participant.

ATENIN

“This experience has enriched my understanding of victim assistance at an international level. From the perspective of ATENIN, I recommend exploring the implementation of proactive evaluation and referral systems, as well as improving inter-institutional coordination in Andalusia. I consider it essential to develop strategies for assisting non-Spanish-speaking victims and incorporating support technologies, adapted to our specific needs. Moreover, exploring programs such as APCARS’ socio-educational judicial control could offer new approaches to addressing recidivism prevention and enhancing the safety and well-being of victims in our context.”



Victim and Witness Support Service Croatia

“Staff Exchange Program left me with lots of knowledge, practical information on functioning of victim’s support in France, great insights on how to improve our organization of work and great network of new colleagues. The presentation ... on the 116 006 Helpline and ability to see the premises and help liners working on this helpline was not only informative but also a very practical part of study program. I hope such programmes will be continued by VSE as they are maybe only chance for colleagues working with the victims at the local levels to get a wider picture of victims and witness support throughout EU and to meet colleagues and exchange experiences and ideas with them.”

Victim Support Malta

“The solitary nature of our profession occasionally creates a sense of isolation. However, this experience served as a poignant reminder of our robust support network and underscored the remarkable outcomes achievable through collaboration and teamwork. Notably, exploring the disparities in systemic approaches across different countries was eye-opening. France’s emphasis on protective measures, exemplified through their dedicated efforts like phone alarms or bracelet systems for victims of crime under protection orders, left a lasting impression. Implementing similar measures in Malta could profoundly empower our victims, fostering a greater sense of safety and agency in their lives. Additionally, recognizing the value of having Victim Support offices within court premises stood out as a crucial resource for individuals seeking guidance and assistance.”

Victim Support Northern Ireland

“The staff Exchange was truly was an educational, insightful yet enjoyable time for me. I was introduced to many wonderful like-minded individuals who are equally as passionate as myself when it comes to supporting all Victims/Witnesses of Crime. We shared knowledge, best practice, barriers and of course solutions based on our current roles and responsibilities within our own version of Victim Support Agencies. Being from Northern Ireland, I noticed the importance of the Victim Support Europe Helpline 116 006 and how this is delivered across Europe. The operational hours and the increased hours offered to Victims when in crisis. This is a truly an amazing service and something I will be advocating heavily on to introduce into Northern Ireland. The Helpline came across as ‘safety net,’ to Victims, a free call to a professional who has expert advice within the criminal justice process. This operation can ‘hold and contain,’ Victims throughout their current journey and with the statistics provided, proves to be a beneficial service.”

APAV

“One of the most impactful aspects of the trip was the opportunity to connect with fellow staff members from various countries who share the same dedication to victim support. Meeting victim support professionals from different entities and learning about their experiences, underscored the collective strength we possess in working towards a common goal. The shared passion and commitment among the diverse group of professionals was nothing short of amazing, reinforcing the notion that our united efforts can make a substantial difference in lives of victims.”