

PRESS RELEASE

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The EU strengthens the protection and support of victims of crime

The Council and the European Parliament provisionally agreed on an update to the 2012 EU law on the rights of, support for and protection of victims of a crime. The new law will make it easier for a victim to report a crime, obtain support via helplines, receive help from support services and access information about their rights.

Victims' helplines

Member states will be required to put in place victims' helplines where victims can obtain information about their rights and receive emotional support, as well as advice about support services.

Throughout the EU, the helpline will be accessible through the same telephone number: 116 006. National numbers, however, may continue to exist.

The helpline will be available in the official language(s) of each country. National governments are also encouraged to provide services in additional languages. Some of the helpline services will also be provided by means of IT tools. These services should be provided in a language that a victim can understand – for instance, through the use of translation and interpretation technologies.

Crime reporting

In order to facilitate access to justice, member states will have to ensure that victims – if this is in their best interests – can report criminal offences through easily accessible, user-friendly information and communication technologies. This possibility should include the submission of evidence.

Member states will also have to facilitate third-party reporting, for instance through cooperation between competent authorities and those civil society organisations which are likely to receive information from victims with regard to criminal offences.

Legal aid

Victims who have the status of parties in criminal proceedings and who do not have sufficient means to pay for a lawyer will receive access to legal aid. This should also help them to claim compensation. Member states may apply a means and/or merit test to determine whether legal aid is to be granted.

Certain categories of victims, as defined by member states, will always be entitled to legal aid, if they do not have sufficient means and if they have the status of parties in the criminal proceedings concerned.

Compensation

In order to make it easier for victims of a crime to obtain compensation, member states will have to put execution or enforcement measures in place to facilitate the securing of compensation from the offender. Execution and enforcement measures are procedures to expedite the implementation of a court decision.

If the victims of violent intentional crimes have not been compensated by the convicted offender within a reasonable time, member states may advance the awarded compensation to the victim. Governments maintain the right to recover from the convicted perpetrator any compensation paid in advance.

Support for children

The updated victims' rights directive pays special attention to the needs of children as victims of crime. Member states will have to ensure the availability of child-friendly services that offer age-appropriate support and protection.

Under the new rules, child victims will benefit from medical examinations, emotional and psychological support, the possibility of crime reporting, an individual assessment of their protection and support needs and the possibility of their testimonies being recorded on video.

Protection of a victim's personal data

In order to better protect victims, member states will also have to ensure that, in the context of a court case, the offender will not have access to the victim's personal data (such as their address), unless this is necessary for their right of defence or other legitimate interests. This should lower the barrier for a victim to report a crime and obtain access to justice.

Next steps

The provisional agreement reached today will now have to be formally adopted by the Council and the European Parliament.

Background

In 2012 the EU adopted a directive to establish minimum standards on the rights of, support for and protection of victims of crime. While a recent evaluation report came to the conclusion that the directive broadly delivered the anticipated benefits for victims of crime, it also identified a number of shortcomings. In responding to those shortcomings, the revision – which the European Commission presented on 12 July 2023 – aims to improve among other things victims' access to information and to enhance safety measures tailored to the specific needs of vulnerable victims.

- [Fighting crime \(background information\)](#)

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