



GUIDELINES FOR VICTIM SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

2022



ENCLAVE

Enhancing the capacity of legal & justice
professionals on forensic interview procedures
for child victims and witnesses of violence



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Guidelines for Victim Support Organisations

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**Women's Support and
Information Center**

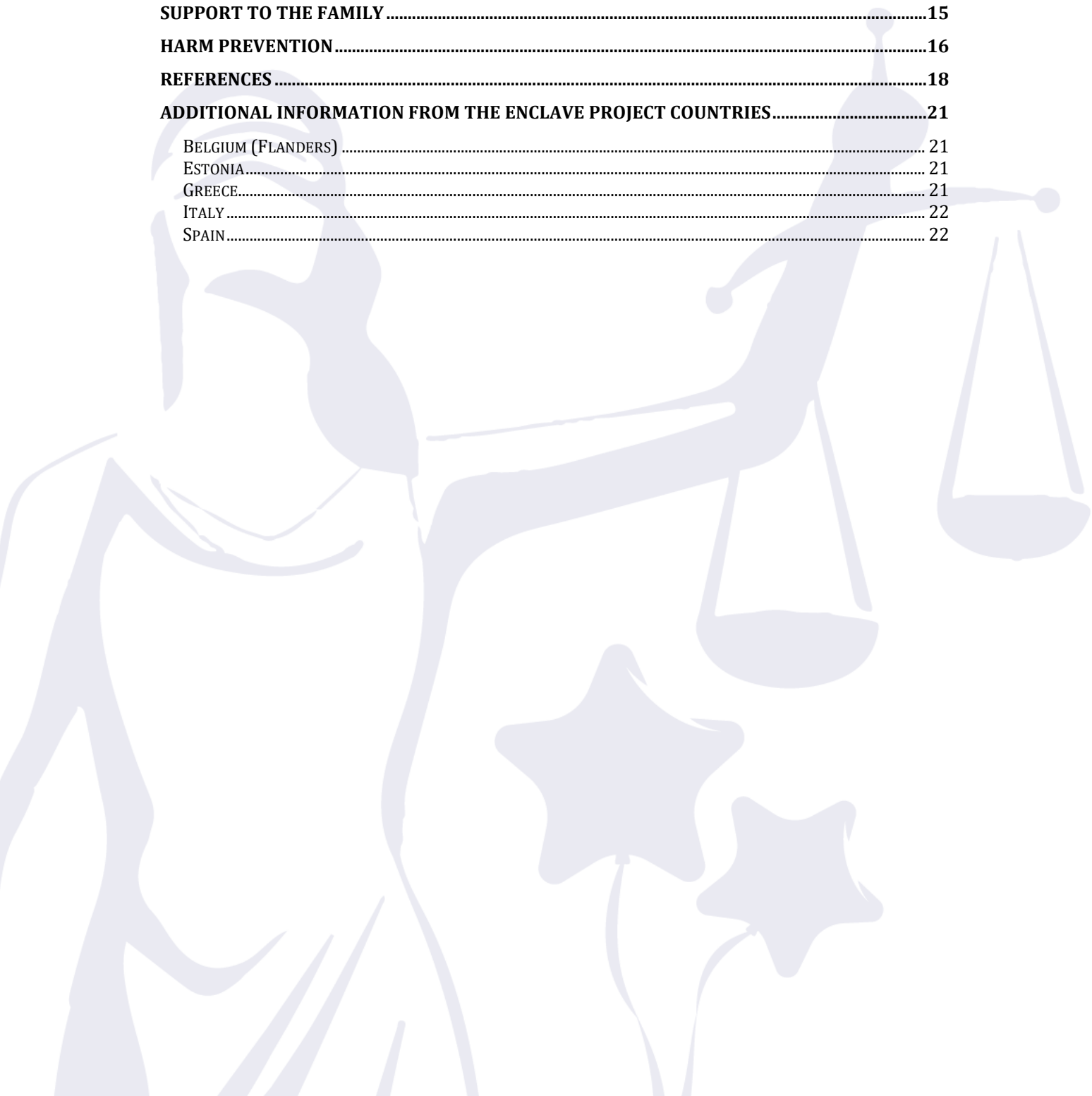
There is a way out of violence!



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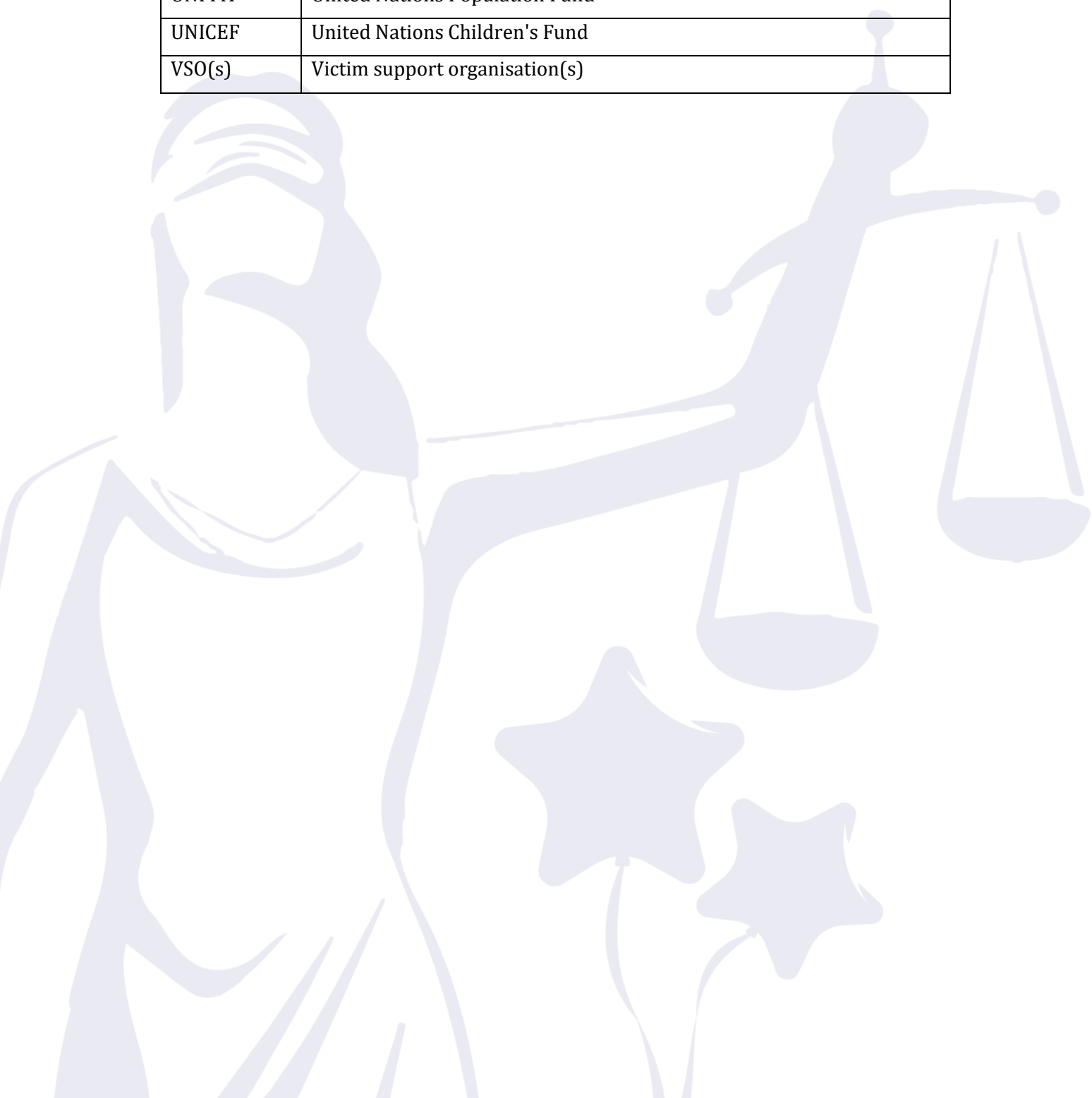
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Abbreviations

CAC	Child Advocacy Centre
CSA	Child sexual abuse
EU	European Union
FRA	Fundamental Rights Agency
LEA officers	Law Enforcement Agency officers
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
SACC	Sexual Assault Crisis Centre
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VSO(s)	Victim support organisation(s)



Introduction

ENCLAVE project tackles the current situation and treatment of children victims and witnesses of sexual violence, in the five European justice systems, regarding the implementation of the Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (the Victims' Rights Directive). ENCLAVE aims to increase the capacity of legal and justice professionals and victim support organisations, increase interprofessional collaboration and networking of the different actors, and prevent the re-victimisation of child victims and witnesses of sexual abuse.

When a child is exposed to sexual violence, it is the responsibility of various parties, including social, medical and mental health service providers and law enforcement agencies, to protect and promote the child's rights and well-being. Each party has a responsibility to play its role in an effective and child-friendly manner, prioritising the child's best interests.

Justice systems are neither equipped nor mandated to fulfil this role alone and need to work hand in hand with the social sector. Social workers are expected to empower victims/witnesses of sexual violence to enhance their well-being. To promote a victim-centred approach to providing services, there should be greater inter-agency communication to ensure that all state agencies, voluntary organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) dealing with vulnerable victims are fully aware of their role and the services others provide.

Why these guidelines?

This support material aims to provide a practical guide highlighting the action guidelines that victims support organisation (VSO) workers, mostly social workers and child protection specialists, must know to provide safety and reduce secondary victimisation of child victims/witnesses of sexual abuse. It is important to remember that each child has her/his particular needs, personality and circumstances, in addition to her/his own experience of sexual violence. Any personal interpretations of the child or their families should not be conveyed by people working with child victims/witnesses.

There is a high risk of secondary and repeat victimisation, intimidation and retaliation connected with violence and sexual abuse. According to Lovett et al. (2018), the institutional responses to child sexual abuse depend on knowledge about sexual abuse in five key institutional arenas (legal, government policy, social work, clinical and the media). These guidelines are targeted at the social work and victim protection arena. People working with children should ensure that children should be heard and treated as subjects in their own lives, not as objects of concern. This is now embedded in a range of national and international policies and guidance, as well as in the work of many organisations.

There is the need for a common understanding of the status of child victims/witnesses of sexual abuse and violence, including partners who are not legal or justice professionals, i.e. care sector. Social workers who work with child victims/witnesses of violence should have

skills and knowledge of trauma-informed, multidisciplinary approaches with understanding vulnerabilities due to developmental stage, cognitive abilities, mental health and age specificity. It is essential to ensure that child victims/witnesses are provided safety and specific adequate support, which should be a primary concern to victim support organisations (VSOs).

Training on networking and collaborating among professionals and support service providers involved in such cases is important. VSOs are very diverse and with different competencies and capacities in Europe. ENCLAVE project studied the child victim's journey through different phases and institutional responses, from information about sexual abuse to trial and post-trial phase.

Definitions/terminology

Child - any person under the age of eighteen years.¹

Child victim - someone under the age of eighteen who has suffered harm when the law was broken. All children have the same rights to be protected, no matter what role they may have had in the crime or the trial of the accused.

Child witness - someone under the age of eighteen who saw or heard what happened or knows something that can help explain the truth about what happened when the law was broken.

The Children's House (Barnahus) model is based on a set of principles and operational protocols to facilitate the different agencies working together in a consistent and child-centred way and provides and coordinates support for specifically victims of sexual abuse. The model works on the basis that the child and family have all their meetings with the various forensic, child protection, health, therapeutic and policing professionals in one house. It is a child-friendly, interdisciplinary and multi-agency centre for child victims/witnesses where children can be interviewed and medically examined for forensic purposes, comprehensively assessed and receive all relevant therapeutic services from the appropriate professionals.

Evidence - information or objects used to help prove the guilt or innocence of someone accused of a crime. The forensic interview is used as evidence in court. Most incidents of sexual abuse are not witnessed. The forensic interview with a vulnerable person is critical evidence for securing the perpetrator's conviction.

Forensic interview is a structured conversation that is designed to obtain information from a child or vulnerable adult about an event he or she may have experienced in an objective, sensitive and legally defensible way. The forensic interview is **critical evidence in court**.

¹ Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>; Article 1(c) of the Victims' Rights Directive. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32012L0029>.

Secondary victimisation occurs when the victim suffers further harm not as a direct result of the criminal act but due to how institutions and other individuals deal with the victim. Secondary victimisation may be caused, for instance, by repeated exposure of the victim to the perpetrator, repeated interrogation about the same facts, the use of inappropriate language or insensitive comments made by all those who come into contact with victims.²

Sexual violence - a sexual act committed against someone without that person's freely given consent. Sexual violence involves victims who do not consent or who are unable to consent to the involved sex act(s).

Victim of sexual violence is a person who has been subjected to sexual acts without his or her consent or who has been subjected to sexual acts with a third party or who has been sexually abused.

Role of victim support organisations

Victims' Rights Directive:
Article 8 on the right to access victim support services
Article 9 on support from victim support services

All persons who have knowledge of a child in need of assistance are required to notify of the child in need of assistance. A request for information or a suspicion of child sexual abuse (CSA) can be raised through the care sector. A victim or a person close to the victim has access to different organisations that can provide information about CSA and what is possible within the social work and judicial sectors.

The Victims' Rights Directive provides that a victim of violent crime should be recognised as the person wronged by the offender, protected against secondary and repeat victimisation, granted access to justice and enabled to participate in criminal proceedings. Recital 37 of the Victims' Rights Directive provides that the support should be available from the moment the competent authorities are aware of the victim and throughout criminal proceedings and for an appropriate time after such proceedings in accordance with the needs and rights of the victim.

Victim support services should be provided before, during and after the trial. This means that VSOs know the victim's judicial path. Victim support services will always protect the victim's confidentiality. They will not pass on the victim's personal details or any other information that could identify the victim without the victim's permission unless the victim/witness could be at risk of harm or if there is a legal reason or requirement to disclose the information.

In line with Articles 8 (right to protection) and 9 of the Victims' Rights Directive, victims with specific needs must have access to specialist support organisations with sufficient staff and funding. Article 18 also requires **special measures to protect these victims from the risks of secondary victimisation** (as a result of their treatment by the police

² EIGE. Thesaurus. <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1358>.

and the criminal justice system), repeat victimisation (when they are victimised again), intimidation and retaliation (from the perpetrator(s)).

Concerning child victims, the Victims' Rights Directive obliges to ensure that the **child's best interests** are a primary consideration and will **be assessed individually**. A child-sensitive approach, taking due account of the child's age, maturity, views, needs and concerns, must prevail (Article 1(2)).

Recital 57 of the Victims' Rights Directive highlights that among other vulnerable groups are child victims who tend to experience a high rate of secondary and repeat victimisation, of intimidation and retaliation. Individual risk assessments should be made, and special protection measures should be taken.

There should be **general and specialised victim support services** available. General support services ensure that victims/witnesses should have access to services facilitating their recovery from violence. Specialised victim support services could be restricted to a particular category or categories of victims; such as child victims or victims of human trafficking. Victims who have suffered considerable harm due to the severity of the crime could require specialist support services. The types of support that such specialist support services should offer could include providing shelter and safe accommodation, immediate medical support, referral to medical and forensic examination for evidence in cases of rape or sexual assault, short and long-term psychological counselling, trauma care, legal advice, advocacy and specific services for children as direct or indirect victims. Specialist support services should be based on an integrated and targeted approach which should, in particular, take into account the specific needs of victims, the severity of the harm suffered as a result of a criminal offence, as well as the relationship between victims, offenders, children and their wider social environment.

At the different stages of the process, information appropriate to their personal situation should be provided in a child-friendly manner (of their rights and the services available to them from a legal, health and social perspective) and at the right time (differences between procedural times and victims/witnesses' times), both to the child and to his/her parents or legal representatives.

Victim support services are not required to provide extensive specialist and professional expertise themselves. If necessary, victim support services should assist victims in calling on existing professional support, such as psychologists (Recital 39 of the Victim's Rights Directive).

Victim support organisation workers are expected to assist and support the victim/witness of sexual abuse and to refer the case to specialised professional teams or team members.

Disclosure and reporting

When someone discloses sexual violence, whether recent or in the past, it is never easy, but the first response to the victim/witness is very important. A friend, family member or professional should be ready to tell them:

- I believe you
- It was not your fault
- I'm so sorry this happened to you
- I am here for you, and I can help you in any way

Let them reveal at their own pace and make their own choice and decision about seeking support or what to do next. The victim/witness needs to get the control back. Non-verbal support is good to provide. Respecting the answer can re-establish their sense of security, safety, and control. Support services should help to shift the burden of responsibility off from the victim/survivor and back to the perpetrator. The only person responsible for the behaviour is the perpetrator.

In cases of CSA, the law enforcement agency should be notified. Then, it should be explained to the victim/witness why this information should be forwarded, and it should be explained what to expect after the disclosure.

If a VSO staff member recognises signs of abuse, she/he should not hesitate to report it. Then the case will be studied by trained specialists, and additional harm to the child will be avoided. VSO staff members should not start to investigate what has exactly happened.

Groupwork

Asking training participants to take a line according to their years of violent experience (time passed from some casework or personal experience). Trainees can say some words about themselves and the case. Then trainees form four groups (read 1-4). Groupwork for 10-15 min.

Group 1: signs of sexual abuse of children up to 3 years old (toddlers)

Group 2: signs of sexual abuse of children 4-6 years old (preschool age)

Group 3: signs of sexual abuse of children 7-13 years old

Group 4: signs of sexual abuse of children 14-18 years old

There are behavioural, physical and emotional signs of sexual abuse.

Groupwork presentations and discussion.

Victims'/witnesses' needs

Victims' Rights Directive

Articles 22 on individual assessment of victims to identify specific protection needs

Article 23 on specific protection needs during criminal proceedings

Article 24 on the protection of child victims during criminal proceedings

The immediate and ongoing safety and well-being of child victims/witnesses of sexual violence should be ensured. VSOs have an important role in following child safety and respecting their rights. VSOs should be informed about the child victims'/witnesses'

journey and ensure their network members are trauma-aware, trauma-sensitive, trauma-responsive professionals and provide trauma-informed care.

Tips to remember

Children who have experienced abuse or witnessed violence may...
... suffer both short-term and long-term effects, both behaviourally and developmentally
... be anxious, depressed, aggressive, have trouble sleeping and difficulty paying attention in school
... be fearful and nervous and react strongly to any kind of scary experience
... be unable to establish a trustful connection with either parent and/or other adults

Interim accommodation or temporary housing should be provided if the home of the child is not a safe place. It should be a priority for the child victim/witness to be placed with a family member they can trust or find foster care and to make support services available. Placement in shelters shall be the last resort.

Victims/witnesses should be believed, heard and understood.

VSO staff members can help the child to understand their rights and prepare for active participation in the justice process. Child victims/witnesses of sexual abuse should know their rights and the procedure. VSO staff members should provide safety and inform the child, the words and expressions used by the child should be accepted and used).

Information and advice provided by victim support services should be given in a clear and understandable way to the child victim/witness. Such information and advice should be provided in simple and accessible language. Accessible language accommodates people of all ages and abilities and does not imply using over-simplified explanations.

It should also be ensured that the child victim/witness is explained what an investigation and a criminal proceeding are, what to expect and who are the people they might meet. In this respect, when providing information, the support organisation worker should consider the victim's/witness' knowledge of the language used, their age, maturity, intellectual and emotional capacity, literacy and any special needs.

Tips to remember

- Children are not guilty of what happened to them.
- Children have a right to choose the support person they trust.
- Children have a right to be heard. Children should be provided with all necessary information on how effectively to use the right to be heard. However, it should be explained to them that their right to be heard and to have their views considered may not necessarily determine the final decision.
- Children have a right to ask questions and to get an answer or explanation to 'why'-questions.
- Children use the right words and expressions. Children's knowledge and experience should be accepted, and there are no wrong words.
- Children have a right to say if they do not understand what was asked or discussed. Children should be encouraged to speak up whenever something was/is unclear.
- Children have a right to ask for breaks and to take their time. Adults should accept their pace.
- Children have a right not to meet the person who has caused harm to them, also in the courtroom.

- **Children's privacy should be accepted, and children should know that they should not answer questions from curious adult people who are not professional service providers. VSO staff members can explain whom to trust, who these people are, and their roles.**

Support organisation workers should protect the privacy, identity and image of child victims and prevent the public dissemination of any information that could lead to their identification.

An individual assessment of the specific needs of the victims/witnesses is a basis for coordinating particular protection measures in time and proper form. To ensure that child victims/witnesses actually receive the assistance they need, the competent authorities or VSOs should refer victims to the appropriate support services. This should be done in particular where the victim's needs are assessed or identified during the individual assessment.

Child victims shall be provided with age-appropriate medical care, emotional, psychosocial, psychological and educational support, as well as any other appropriate support tailored to the particular case. VSOs could be in the position to coordinate and to follow that support and professional services are accessible and received.

VSO-s prepare child victims and witnesses for the justice process

The care sector must understand and cooperate with the justice sector. Social sector specialists can prepare a child victim/witness for the justice process and inform the justice sector about the case's progress. The Istanbul Convention obliges states to take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms to provide for effective cooperation between all relevant state agencies, including the judiciary, public prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, local and regional authorities, as well as non-governmental organisations and other relevant organisations and entities, in protecting and supporting victims and witnesses of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.

In cases of sexual abuse, criminal proceedings will take place. Codes of criminal proceedings can differ by country, but victims' rights in criminal proceedings, including the right to protection and compensation, should be ensured in all Member States. Victim participatory rights are currently recognised as an important component of criminal justice proceedings. There should also be the main point of contact for witnesses to keep them informed of the case's progress, which will either provide support or refer to relevant support agencies. The police routinely refer the victim to a support service.

In all cases...

- ...children should feel comfortable and safe to participate effectively in the proceedings;
- ...judicial systems in Europe need to be adapted to the specific needs of children; and
- ...must respect their rights.

People involved in the justice process are police, prosecutors, judges/magistrates, LEA officers, lawyers, child psychologists and forensic psychologists, social workers from victim support agencies and courthouses, etc. These people are expected to behave professionally and to treat the child with respect and understanding. Child victims and witnesses can tell that they don't feel good or there is something they need in particular. People in the justice process should do everything they can to help the child victims and witnesses; if they can't, they should tell them why they cannot help.

When the people in the justice process interview (asking different questions about what happened) children and it is hard to understand what they say, then children should be encouraged to ask them to explain. The child victim/witness should be explained the possibility of pausing or ending the interview whenever needed (for example, if they feel tired or upset).

Forensic interview. Testimony. Evidence

The care sector should understand the importance of a forensic interview because this will be used as evidence in court. The forensic interview is best understood as a structured conversation that is based on the interviewee's level of cognitive development and communication skills. The forensic interviewers are professionals with special training. They collect evidence and package it in a way so that it can be presented during a prosecution. Ideally, these interviews are conducted in child advocacy centres (CACs) or Children's Houses, which offer a child-friendly setting that brings together professionals in child protection and law enforcement. This avoids the child having to undergo multiple interviews and ensures that the person or persons conducting the interview are forensically trained.

A key aim is to reduce the number of times the child is questioned, which contributes to lowering the prevalence of secondary victimisation. The research suggests that the more often the person is interviewed, the less reliable their testimony becomes.³ **When the forensic interview is done after the victim/witness has already been interviewed by several other bystanders and professionals (for example, by a family member, teacher, child protection specialist or psychologist), it is unlikely the best statement by the victim/witness from a legal perspective.**

A forensic interviewer and a medical or forensic doctor have a truth-finding role in investigating child sexual abuse cases. However, other professionals and support persons have different roles and should not ask about the case details. Unskilled intervention leads to additional trauma to the child and makes it difficult or impossible to make the perpetrator accountable.

In case of suspicion, police or another specialised agency should be noticed, and they will refer the case to professional teams. In this way, the child's memory is not harmed, and re-

³ Cronch, L. E., Viljoen, J. L., & Hansen, D. J. (2006). Forensic interviewing in child sexual abuse cases: Current techniques and future directions. *Faculty Publications, Department of Psychology. Paper 6* ; Duron, F. J. & Cheung, M. (2016). Impact of Repeated Questioning on Interviewers: Learning From a Forensic Interview Training Project, *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 25:4, pp. 347-362.

victimisation is avoided, reducing the adverse consequences to their mental health derived from an incorrect intervention.

The benchmark protocol findings of the ENCLAVE project revealed the gaps in which the evaluation of the practice is often complex and, therefore, the rights and interests of the victims are not fully protected. Issues such as its regulation based on age, the type of crime or the assessment required on a case-by-case basis are analysed.

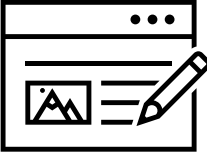
A key aim is to reduce the number of times the child or vulnerable adult is questioned. Since research suggests that the more often the person is interviewed, the less reliable their testimony becomes. Unreliable testimony means that the evidence in court is not taken seriously, and the offender will not be held accountable.


Necessary measures should be taken to ensure that assistance and support are provided to victims before, during and, for an appropriate period of time, after the conclusion of criminal proceedings, in order to enable them to exercise their rights.

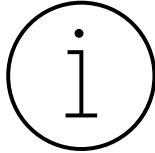
Groupwork
Ask the training participants to form groups and discuss good and bad practices of supporting the child victim/witness of sexual violence. Discuss the enabling factors of success and reasons for failure or poor outcomes. Groupwork for 10-15 min. General discussion.

A caring and professional way throughout the justice process

Who are the people to meet in the justice process? What is their role? VPOs must be prepared to explain the justice process to the victims/witnesses.

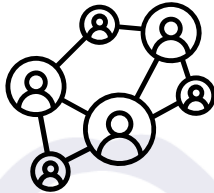
	<p>Information about abuse (or suspicion of abuse) should be reported.</p> <p>Social workers (VPOs) help the victim and people close to the victim. They listen to what is told to them.</p> <p>Wrong action: social workers may ask questions for safety purposes, not about what "really happened", because they want to be sure about their report.</p> <p>Right action: making sure that victims of violence are safe and cared for.</p>
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	<p>The Victim's Rights Directive requires that the necessary measures are used to ensure the provision of assistance and support to victims before, during and, for an appropriate period of time, after the conclusion of criminal proceedings.</p>
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Child victims and witnesses must be supported with access to clear and concise information in a language they understand.

State-wide 24/7 telephone helplines should be available free of charge. Helplines are essential in offering immediate expert advice and pointing victims towards safety.



Professional networks in the social and justice sector and interagency cooperation can help to make justice, support a new start for the victim and make an offender accountable.

Child victims/witnesses are scared, confused, and traumatised.

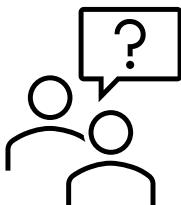
VSOs should work together with trauma-aware, trauma-sensitive, trauma-responsive professionals who provide trauma-informed care.

In cases of intra-familial sexual abuse or family violence, shelters, residential homes, or foster family care should be accessible and available across the country.



Child-friendly criminal proceedings accept children's rights and avoid secondary victimisation.

The new comprehensive EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the European Child Guarantee are major policy initiatives put forward by the European Commission to better protect all children, to help them fulfil their rights and to place them right at the centre of EU policy making.⁴ There are six thematic areas in the strategy, one of them being child-friendly justice.⁵ EU actions are presented to support justice systems in upholding the rights and needs of children.



The forensic interviewer's primary role is to collect information that can be used in court. The police investigator/forensic interviewer – asks what happened. He/she should explain what he/she is doing, why they want to talk with the child victim/witness, and why this conversation must be videotaped (when required). People who investigate a crime should spend only the amount of time with the child that is necessary to find out what happened. People who interview a child victim or witness should be specially trained so that they ask questions correctly and in a respectful way. They should think about what the child needs and treat the child fairly and respectfully.

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/rights-child/eu-strategy-rights-child-and-european-child-guarantee_en

⁵ Thematic area 4 of the EU strategy on the child-friendly justice, https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/rights-child/child-friendly-justice_en



A medical examination is often needed. The Victims' Rights Directive requires that there should be accessible rape crisis or sexual violence referral centres for victims in sufficient numbers to provide for medical and forensic examination, trauma support and counselling for victims.



The investigation process takes place. The investigation aims to learn if a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, reduce the risk and increase the child's safety, and determine if a criminal action has occurred and the need for services. Investigations may be conducted by child protective services staff and/or law enforcement and often include a multidisciplinary team.

Prosecutors decide whether to start a criminal procedure. A prosecutor is a person in charge of presenting evidence that the law has been broken and that the accused is the person responsible.



The judge/magistrate ensures that the law is respected, the truth is made clear, and everyone follows the rules in court.

The judge's/magistrate's job is to listen to everyone and then make decisions in the court. They may ask questions. Judges can have assistants, and there are interpreters if needed. There can be court officers for safety.

There are people around the victim and witness whose job is to help the child victim/witness in court. Depending on the national framework, they might have different names (support person, attorney, counsel, guardian, court-appointed special advocate, victim advocate, intermediary). An attorney or counsel helps people tell their side of what happened and asks the judge for what they want. An accused (respondent in court) can have a defendant's attorney.

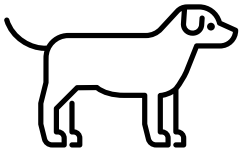
The child victim/witness should be adequately explained what is going on in court and what to expect. They should be allowed to ask questions, and these should be answered.


Visiting the courthouse before the hearing is appreciated. VSO staff members could organise it.



Assistance and support should be provided appropriately after the conclusion of criminal proceedings.

What could be thought and planned for future work?

	<p>Therapy dogs (and other animals) work in some countries' judicial systems.</p> <p>The presence of a dog in the court or interview room contributes to the child's feeling of safety and companionship.</p> <p>"Courthouse facility dogs" are common in America, Canada, Chile, Australia and Japan.</p>
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	<p>Intermediaries are communication specialists who assist children and vulnerable adults with communication difficulties in the justice system in Ireland and the UK.</p> <p>Intermediaries help to ease the burden of child victims giving evidence and to promote their overall welfare and well-being. They are communication specialists who use their clinical skills and expertise to assess and address communication barriers linked to mental health challenges, trauma and anxiety.</p> <p>Intermediaries come from a variety of backgrounds, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speech and language therapists• Psychological and mental health professionals• Teachers• Social workers <p>More: https://www.intermediaries-for-justice.org</p>
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Tips to remember

Everyone who has contact with a child victim or witness should consider the child's needs, thoughts and feelings. They should talk to the child in a place where they feel comfortable and safe. They should speak in a language that the child uses and understands.

Support to the family

According to the Istanbul Convention (IC), special attention to the rights and needs of children who have witnessed violence should be considered. Article 26 of the IC refers to the protection and support of child victims. In the case of abused children, especially sexually abused children, parental counselling is also needed to help them cope. This is important for the child's recovery.

Directive 2011/93 recital 31 suggests that assistance and advice should be considered to be extended to parents or guardians of the child victims where they are not involved as suspects in relation to the offence concerned in order to help them to assist child victims throughout the proceedings.

VSO staff should be ready to support families or family members the child trusts. Family members should know that not all sexual violence is experienced the same way, nor does it cause the same impact. The child's age, the type of interaction with the attacker, the violence and deception used, and many other variables we know about affect their psychological state. Therefore, it is necessary to consult specialists, who will guide and

schedule the following steps, assessing the need (or otherwise) for the child to receive psychological support. VSO may give some advice to them to remember⁶:

"Your attitude, serenity and self-confidence are also a way of helping the child. We know it's not easy to stay in control. Therefore, here are some guidelines that improve feelings of guilt and can help reduce your anxiety:

- I'll have to assume that they may not want to talk to me at the moment or have therapy.
- I won't inquire continuously. I'll be available for them to tell me what they want, when they want to, and whenever they need me.
- I won't blame myself, and I'll understand that the attacker has breached my trust too.
- I'll try to understand that my thoughts and interpretations regarding sexual violence are not those of the child.
- I'll deal with the subject patiently, without fretting over what they may tell me, so that the child can remain calm.
- I think that the child's life is much more than the sexual violence they have suffered.
- I won't transmit fears to them, nor will I make them stay on constant alert from now on.
- I'll prepare myself for the knowledge that the matter may perhaps resurface in adolescence or other stages of life.
- I'll respect the way they talk about the attacker.
- I'll understand that their most obvious symptoms, if any, are part of a process.
- Suppose there is masturbation or inappropriate sexual behaviour. In that case, I won't make them feel bad, but I'll redirect their behaviour and tell them that certain sexual actions must be carried out in private and never forcing other children.
- I'll repeat to them that I think they have shown a lot of strength and courage.
- I'll seek help if I need it and surround myself with supportive people.
- I'll remind them of all the beautiful things in life and all the things they have yet to experience.

Remember

- Don't use words that the child has not used to express him/herself.
- Thank them for trusting in you to talk about it.
- You shouldn't blame, question, or doubt what they tell you.
- Ask for help from specialists in sexual violence.

Harm prevention

The ENCLAVE project Benchmark protocol highlights that there are some problems with the training of professionals and VSO staff. There is a need to strengthen training for professionals dealing with victims and witnesses of violence, who could help prevent or

⁶ Bravo Correa, M. & Juárez López, J.R. (2021). *And now, how can I help you? Recommendations for family members. When there is a disclosure of sexual violence in children and adolescents.* Centre d'Estudis Jurídics i Formació Especialitzada (CEJFE). https://cejfe.gencat.cat/web/.content/home/publicacions/guies-formatives/Recomanacions_familiars_EN.pdf

detect acts of such violence or prevent secondary and repeat victimisation. All those who provide counselling, therapy and related services to victims of sexual crime should have appropriate training.

Promoting awareness through awareness-raising campaigns and education at all levels is important. States should promote and conduct awareness-raising campaigns and disseminate information, together with civil society. Engaging civil society organisations is also stressed in the Istanbul Convention. Article 25 of the Victims' Rights Directive requires training for professionals and VSOs providing victim support and restorative justice services. The adequate training should be appropriate to their contact with victims and observe professional standards to ensure such services are provided in an impartial, respectful and professional manner.

Education should ensure that the right to personal integrity is included in school curricula at all levels.



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Additional information from the ENCLAVE project countries

Belgium (Flanders)

Information & advice:

- Child Abuse Trust Centre (VK's) - <https://www.vertrouwenscentrum-kindermishandeling.be/>
- Care Centers after Sexual abuse (in cases of CSA the centers notifies immediately the public prosecutor) - <https://www.seksueelgeweld.be/zorgcentra-na-seksueel-geweld-wat-voor-wie-waar>
- Slachtofferhulp CAW (Victim Support Department from the General Welfare Center) - <https://www.caw.be/hoewijhelpen/begeleiding/schokkende-gebeurtenis/slachtofferhulp/?regio>
- Helplines and online chats for minor victims (Nupraatikerover, 1712, AWEL) → will not result in a police report; anonymous; free; only for support and information.
 - <https://www.nupraatikerover.be/>
 - <https://1712.be>
 - <https://www.awel.be/>
- CLB (Student Guidance Centers) - <https://www.vrij CLB.be/>
- Crime-specific VSO (ex. Payoke is a VSO specialised in supporting victims of trafficking in human beings and loverboys) - <https://www.payoke.be/>
- Other care providers (ex. health care professionals, therapists, etc.)

Estonia

Information & advice:

- Helpline 116111
- Chats for minor victims at www.lasteabi.ee
- Police 112
- Children's Houses (lastemaja)
- Sexual Assault Crisis Centres (SACCs, 4 in Estonia)
- Advice from www.palunabi.ee

Greece

Information & advice:

- 24-hour SOS helpline: 15900
It is also supported by the email address: sos15900@isotita.gr
- Gender Secretariat for Gender Equality (G.S.G.E): www.womensos.gr
 - Consulting Centers across Greece
 - Shelter services across Greece
- Child Abuse Centre with a 24-hour sos-helpline: 10454 www.eliza.org.gr
- State website with all necessary information and helplines: www.metoogreece.gr

Italy

Information & advice:

- Helplines:

Emergenza Infanzia – Official Italian Government Helpline: 114

Telefono Azzurro: 1.96.96

Telefono Rosa: 1522

Child Hospital “Bambin Gesù” (advanced psychological and neuropsychiatric support):

06.68.59.22.65

- State Police: 113

- Carabinieri: 112

- Victims’ support Offices

- Social Services

- State Prosecutor’s Offices

Spain

Information & advice:

- Helpline 116111

- Police: 112, 062 (EMUME:

<https://www.guardiacivil.es/es/servicios/violenciadegeneroyabusoamenores/index.html>)

- Victims' Support Offices

- Prosecutor's Office

- Social Services

- Fundación ANAR: 900 20 20 10 or chat for minor victims: <https://chat.anar.org/>



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