Joint Statement in reaction to the Council position on the Victims' Rights Directive revision

article, protection from violence and hate, hate crime

We joined 51 organisations calling on the EU to honour commitments to victims of crime by adopting a strong Victims' Rights Directive.

What is the Victims' Rights Directive?

The Victims' Rights Directive establishes minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime and ensures that persons who have fallen victim to crime are recognised and treated with respect. They must also receive proper protection, support and access to justice.

Why is the Directive important?

The Directive is important because it lays down a number of measures that Member States must take to support victims of crimes and strengthen their position under procedural laws. It specifically covers trans people, and notes that victims should be treated fairly irrespective of their gender identity and expression, while acknowledging the specificities of gender-based violence. Further, Member States are required to carry out individual assessments considering various aspects, including gender identity, to better protect victims of crimes.

Why are we concerned now?

The Directive is now being revised and the various arms of the European Union have finalised their respective positions. Following this, they will go into negotiations on the final text.

The Council's position has revealed that a number of rights that would benefit all victims, no matter their background and identity, have been diluted. This should concern the trans community as well, which continues to face high rates of violence and bias-motivated crimes. The EU Fundamental Rights Agency's 2024 survey results show that 39% of trans people experienced 3 or more physical or sexual attacks due to their identity in the last 5 years. At the same time, only 19% reported the latest hate-motivated incident they experienced. Read the Joint Statement below to find out more.

Joint Statement in reaction to the Council position on the Victims' Rights Directive revision

On 13 June, the Council of the European Union adopted **its position** on the Commission's proposal for a revision of the Victims' Rights Directive. The European Parliament already published its **negotiating mandate** in April. More than twelve years after the adoption of the Victims' Rights Directive, this was an opportunity for governments to stand in **solidarity with all victims of crime** and to strengthen their rights and treatment.

Regrettably, with this Council position, States have shown little willingness to commit to enhancing victim rights. They have largely **rejected or diluted** the EU Commission's proposals, turning obligations into mere options. This

undermines the scope of the Victims' Rights Directive, leaving diverse crime victims inadequately protected and potentially harmed by the systems meant to protect them and deliver justice.

For example, specific rights have been **removed or weakened**, including those relating to safe reporting of crime, court-based support services, access to medical care services, privacy protections, information and participation rights, offender compensation, legal remedies and review decisions. Additionally, the role of NGOs has been diminished by removing commitments to coordinate services – which are largely delivered by civil society – to one of mere consultation. This increases the risk of further stigma, discrimination, or prejudice. Therefore, clear and binding obligations for EU Member States are essential.

This position of the Council contrasts with the European Parliament's report, which has adopted proposals that build an effective legislative framework for **coordinated support, protection and justice.** Thus, the European Parliament recognises that the actions and costs involved in this process are investments in our future.

Every Euro spent on victims' rights and services **reduces the cost of crime and its emotional impact**, and it also increases the ability of individuals to return to work, next to the efficiency and effectiveness of criminal proceedings. The European Parliament's proposals commit to a thriving, safer, more resilient and more just society that upholds EU values, including fundamental rights.

Member States have recently adopted the Directive on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, the recast EU Directive on Combating and Preventing Trafficking in Human Beings and they are currently negotiating the Regulation laying down rules to prevent and combat Child Sexual Abuse. This shows a **willingness to seek the advancement of the rights** of specific victim groups, with a particular focus on children, women and victims of human trafficking.

Member States should now affirm their **commitment to all victims of crime** regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, age, disability, ethnicity, residence status,, and type of exploitation by enhancing minimum standards for all in the Victims' Rights Directive Revision. There should be equal treatment of all victims of crime; no victim should be left behind.

With a new Parliament and renewed vigour, we call on **all EU Member States and the European Parliament to stand together** – united for every victim in the EU. We call on them to genuinely explore solutions proposed by the European Commission and Parliament that will finally make victims' rights a reality. We call on them to **honour commitments to victims of crime**; by adopting a strong Victims' Rights Directive as the cornerstone legislation for all victims of crime, Member States can demonstrate their commitment to valuing fundamental human rights, human dignity and the European Union's foundational values.

Signatories

1. AGE Platform Europe
2. Center for Reproductive Rights
3. Child Helpline International
4. End FGM European Network
5. Eurochild
6. European Disability Forum (EDF)
7. European Forum for Restorative Justice (EFRJ)
8. European Sex Workers Alliance (ESWA)
9. ILGA Europe (the European region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association)
10. La Strada International
11. Missing Children Europe

12. Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)
13. Validity Foundation
14. Trans Europe and Central Asia (TGEU)
15. Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE Network)
16. Advocates for Victims of Homicide (AdVIC) Ireland
17. A Associação Portuguesa de Apoio à Vítima (APAV Portugal)
18. Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (APHVF/ SPAVO) Cyprus
19. Associazione Italiana di Supporto Vittimologico
20. Associazione Libra Italy
21. ATENIN Spain
22. Bijeli Krug Croatia
23. Bily Kruh Bezpeci (Czech Republic)
24. Brottsofferjouren Sverige (The Crime Victims' Center Sweden)
25. Child Rights Centre Albania
26. DROGA Poland
27. Federation for Victim Assistance Ireland
28. France Victimes
29. Irish Road Victims Association (IRVA); International Road Victims Partnership
30. Klaipedos Socialines ir Psichologines Pagalbos Centras
31. Law and Internet Foundation (Bulgaria)
32. Opferhilfe Berlin e.V.
33. Rete Dafne Italia
34. Slachtofferhulp Netherlands
35. Skalbes Latvia
36. The Smile of the Child – Greece
37. Victim and Witness Support Service Croatia
38. Victim Support at Court (Ireland)
39. Victim Support Denmark
40. Victim Support Finland (RIKU)
41. Victim Support Flanders, CAW (Belgium)
42. Victim Support Malta
43. Victim Support Sweden
44. Victim Support UK
45. Vilnius Institute for Advanced Studies (VILIAS)
46. Woman's Room – Center for Sexual Rights Croatia
47. Weisser Ring Austria
48. Weisser Ring Germany
49. Victimology Society of Serbia
50. Vilnius Institute of Advanced Studies (VILIAS)
51. White Circle Croatia