

FINAL REPORT

PROJECT PROPOSAL: Raising awareness on victims' rights in Serbia

APPLICANT: Victimology Society of Serbia

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ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED ACCORDING TO THE CONTRACT AGREEMENT

Activity 1: Developing and publishing brochures with guidelines and information for victims and practitioners/service providers about victims' rights and available victim support in Serbia

Output 1.1. Guide through the criminal justice system for victims – printed in 200 copies

Output 1.2. Guide through victim support in Serbia – printed in 200 copies

Activity 2: Regular up-date of the database and interactive map of existing services for victims in Serbia, which resulted from the research “Overview of existing victim support services in Serbia” and distribution of the informative materials from campaign #PomocPostoji

Output 2.1. Database of victim support services regularly up-dated

Output 2.2. Interactive map regularly up-dated

Output 2.3. Materials from the campaign #PomocPostoji distributed

Activity 3: Raising awareness of representatives of the state institutions and civil society organizations in Serbia about rights and services for victims and fostering their networking and cooperation in providing victim support

Activity 3a: Capacity building and networking workshops for victim support providers in Serbia

Output 3a.1. Workshops' reports with conclusions and recommendations

Output 3a.2. Report on dissemination

Activity 3b: Advocacy and awareness raising with government and reaching out beyond Belgrade to regional centers

Output 3b.1. Short summaries from the regional meetings with conclusions and recommendations

Output 3b.2. Report on dissemination

Output 3b.3. Report on media and social media coverage

Activity 4: Comparative analysis and benchmarking of victim support systems in the selected Balkan countries

Output 4.1. Research report – printed in 200 copies

Output 4.2. Short summaries of the findings with examples of good practice

Output 4.3. Report on dissemination

INTRODUCTION

Transposition and implementation of the *Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime* (hereinafter referred to as the Victims' Rights Directive) into the national legislation and practice in Serbia has been recognised and set out as a key objective in relation to procedural safeguards and access to justice defined in the Accession Action Plan for the Chapter 23.

Implementing the Victims' Rights Directive should ensure that persons who have fallen victims of crime are recognized and treated with respect and dignity, in a sensitive and professional manner without discrimination of any kind. It ensures that persons receive proper protection from secondary and repeat victimisation, from intimidation and from retaliation. Victims should receive appropriate support throughout proceedings and beyond. They must have equal access to justice, compensation and restoration, as well as to victim support. There is a strong focus on the right to information which is crucial for exercising other rights.

The Multi Donor Trust Fund for Justice Sector Support (MDTF JSS) Report "Overview of existing victim support services in Serbia", prepared in 2017, suggested that victims do not receive all relevant information about their rights and interests and are insufficiently supported.¹ The research also revealed that there is no systematic approach to referrals in Serbia. However, the first step in making referrals regular is that all organisations in contact with victims must be aware of the range of services available locally and nationally.

To support Serbian authorities in its efforts to establish comprehensive victim support service, the MDTF-JSS in partnership with the Victimology Society of Serbia implemented the project *Raising awareness on victims' rights in Serbia*. It particularly focused on the work on the ground with civil society organisations and local state institutions as victim service providers. There were two overall goals: 1) To raise awareness of victims and service providers/practitioners from both state institutions and civil society organizations in Serbia about rights and services for victims of crime; and 2) To foster networking and strengthening cooperation of relevant state institutions and civil society organizations on the regional and local level to facilitate referrals and enable timely and equal access to victim support for all victims.

This final report provides an overview of key project results, reflection on the accomplished aims, and main conclusions and recommendations for the improvement of victims' rights and victim support in Serbia. Along with other project outputs, it can be used for further advocacy for victims' rights and adequate victim support system in Serbia in the context of the accession process and harmonization of national legislation, policy and practice with the EU aquis.

The report consists of four parts that match with the main project activities and tasks, in which main project results are presented. The report finishes with main groups of recommendations for the improvement of victim support in Serbia.

¹ Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Justice Sector Support in Serbia, World Bank, Victim Support Europe (2017) *Overview of existing victim support services in Serbia*, https://victimsupport.eu/activeapp/wp-content/files_mf/1506075470MDTF_Mappingreport.pdf.

RESULTS OF THE IMPLEMENTED ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Developing and publishing brochures with guidelines and information for victims and practitioners/service providers about victims' rights and available victim support in Serbia

Output 1.1. Guide through the criminal justice system for victims – printed in 200 copies

Output 1.2. Guide through victim support in Serbia – printed in 200 copies

Information is a fundamental right of a victim of crime, crucial for exercising other rights and getting proper assistance and support. According to the Victims' Rights Directive crime victims have the right to obtain information during the first contact with the competent state authorities, institutions or organizations that come into contact with the victim. This means that the competent state authorities, institutions and organizations are obliged to inform the victim, inter alia, about available forms of assistance and support, and whom to contact to receive assistance, support and protection. In order to support better informing of victims on their rights in the criminal justice system and on available victim services in Serbia, two brochures were developed: the *Guide through the criminal justice system for victims* and the *Guide through victim support services in Serbia*.

Guide through the criminal justice system of Serbia for victims empowers victims through the criminal justice system and informs them about their rights and how to exercise them. The Guide is a user-friendly and easy to navigate. Victims receive step by step guidance through the criminal justice system of Serbia. Topics include how to report a crime, who and how initiates the criminal proceedings against adults and juveniles, victim in the court, victim's protection, and the right to compensation. This guide is also meant and to some extent already proved to be a helpful tool for professionals and volunteers providing services to victims. It answers for service providers specific questions that victims

may have as they navigate through the criminal justice system.





EU acquis call Serbian authorities to facilitate referral of victims to victim support services. To achieve this, it is necessary for all service providers to have information about existing services for victims in Serbia. Having this in mind, a *Guide through victim support services in Serbia* was prepared. It presents a printed version of information presented on the Interactive online map of victim support services in Serbia, which is discussed under activity 2.1. and 2.2. The Guide provides information on existing victim support services in Serbia, available forms of assistance and support provided by each specific service, contact information and information on working hours. An added value of

this brochure is that victims could use it as well. It is beneficial particularly given the fact that a significant proportion of the Serbian population still does not have access to internet,² and, thus, they are not able to use the Interactive online map of victim support services. Therefore, this Guide is an alternative source of information about victim support in Serbia for both victims and service providers.

Each guide was printed in 200 copies and distributed at the regional meetings with key stakeholders in Kragujevac, Novi Sad, Užice, Niš, Zaječar, Belgrade and Šabac, which are discussed in more details under the activity 3b. To reach as many people as possible, electronic version of the guides were sent to all participants of the regional meetings, as well as to all victim support services included in the Interactive online map of victim support services, who were asked to post them on their web sites and share via social networks. Additionally, electronic versions were distributed through the VDS's website www.vds.org.rs, the website <https://www.victimservices.eu>, the website of the MDTF JSS www.mdtfjss.org.rs and the social media (Facebook, Twitter). Finally, it will be possible to re-print the guides, with necessary updates, as well as to send them in the pdf. format to all interested stakeholders who could also print them and use in hard copy.

² In 2016 only 54% of the population in Serbia had access to Internet. The data is available at <http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users/serbia/>, page accessed on 9 July 2018.

Activity 2: Regular up-date of the database and interactive map of existing services for victims in Serbia and distribution of the informative materials from campaign

#PomocPostoji

Output 2.1. Database of victim support services regularly up-dated

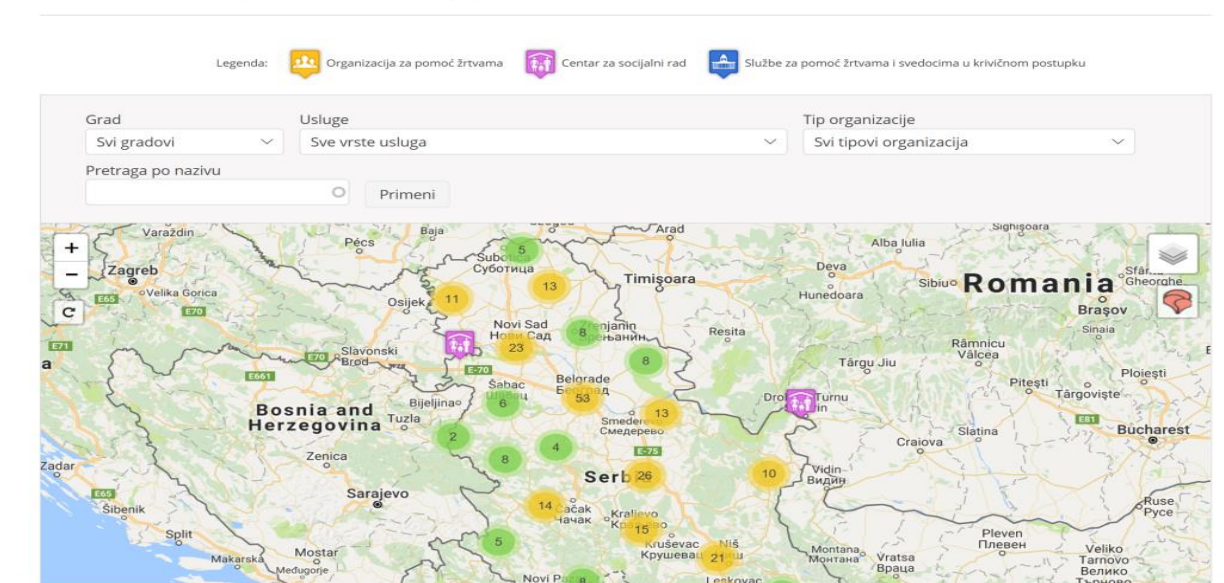
Output 2.2. Interactive map regularly up-dated

Output 2.3. Materials from the campaign #PomocPostoji distributed

The Interactive online map of victim support services in Serbia was one of the main products of the research “Overview of existing victim support services in Serbia”, implemented by the MDTF-JSS in partnership with Victim Support Europe in 2017. The map was developed and regularly up-dated by the VDS ever since then. It is available at <https://www.victimservices.eu> and <http://www.interaktivnamapa.rs/>.

The Interactive online map is a useful tool for victims, victim support professionals and the general public. It helps victims to obtain accurate information and request desired assistance, but it also helps practitioners to refer victims to proper services. It is a kind of an online address book of state and non-state victim support providers in Serbia, which contains information on victim support services presented in the *Guide through victim support services in Serbia*, but is even broader since it encompasses information about all Centres for Social Work in Serbia as well. At the moment of writing this report, the Interactive online map contained information about 287 victim support services available in Serbia.

There are four main ways of searching the online map: by the cities in Serbia, by the type of organization (general victim support services, centres for social work, victim and witness support services in the criminal procedure), by the type of the services provide, and by the name of organization.



The Interactive online map of victim support services in Serbia

The Interactive online map of victim support services is regularly up-dated. For a regular update, a short questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire has been regularly sent to victim services already included in the map, as well as to the newly identified victim support services. Regular up-dating was also done by contacting all Centres for Social Work and checking basic information relevant for the map. Finally, each victim support service already included in the map was encouraged to inform VDS about any changes to be included.

The Interactive online map was presented to the key stakeholders at the regional meetings that aimed at advocacy and awareness raising with state and non-state actors and reaching out beyond Belgrade to regional centres, which are discussed in more details under the activity 3b. The use and usefulness of the Interactive online map were discussed and following conclusions were drafted:

- The Interactive online map is an extremely useful tool, but a small number of key stakeholders in Serbia has used it so far. Thus, it is necessary to promote it further and bring it closer to professionals, but also to citizens, for example, via billboards or flyers. More professionals should be informed about the map through similar regional meetings. It is also relevant to inform the Coordination Groups established based on the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence about the map and its use. In this regard, information about the Interactive on line map was sent to all higher and basic prosecutors' offices to share it with Coordination Groups' members since public prosecutors are coordinators of these groups on the local level. Finally, it is important to continue with sharing the link of the Interactive online map at various internet sites, including courts and prosecutors' offices in Serbia.
- It was suggested to broaden the Interactive online map with the contact data of the police in Serbia as well, but also to include data on other victim support providers. In this regard, after regional meetings, VDS invited representatives of relevant organizations (represented at the meetings or suggested by the meeting participants to be contacted and included) to send the data to be included in the map. New organizations, mainly civil society organizations, were included in the map. As for the police, this proposal needs to be presented and discussed with relevant state authorities, since the data about the police could be included in the Interactive online map only upon previous approval of the Ministry of Interior.
- Due to frequent data changes it is necessary to regularly up-date the Interactive online map, which was done during the project implementation and it is envisaged to be done further by the VDS.
- It was advised to modernize the design and technical capabilities of the Interactive online map that would enable easier and faster approach to contact information for victims. It should also turn into a mobile application at some point in the future.
- The Interactive online map presents a basis for creating a network of victim support organizations, which could further lead to the establishment of a national help line for victims as in other European countries, which should use resources and capacities of existing services.

Along with presenting and informing key stakeholders in different regional centres in Serbia about the Interactive online map, informative materials (brochures and posters) developed in the

aftermath of the research “Overview of existing victim support services in Serbia”, within the Campaign #PomocPostoji were widely distributed. Additionally, these materials were sent to victim support services from an Interactive online map on their request. Informative materials were distributed to various stakeholders – police, judiciary, social welfare, healthcare institutions, civil society organizations.



Materials from the Campaign #PomocPostoji

In total, 800 printed copies of brochures for victims and 200 posters for service providers were distributed. They help both victims and practitioners to be informed about the impact of a crime on a victim, victims’ rights in the aftermath of a crime, victims’ needs and possible reactions. They also help in raising awareness about different categories of victims in need of assistance and support, which is important precondition for looking for assistance and approaching victim support services.

Activity 3: Raising awareness of representatives of the state institutions and civil society organizations in Serbia about rights and services for victims and fostering their networking and cooperation in providing victim support

To ensure sustainability and local ownership of the results achieved in the improvement of victim support system in Serbia, one of the activities was focused on dissemination and discussion of analytic documents prepared by the MTRF JSS and advocacy for implementation of recommendations among relevant stakeholders. This was done in two ways: through capacity building and networking workshop for victim support providers, and through advocacy and awareness raising of key stakeholders in different regional centres in Serbia.

Activity 3a: Capacity building and networking workshops for victim support providers in Serbia

Output 3a.1. Workshops' reports with conclusions and recommendations

Output 3a.2. Report on dissemination

Capacity building and networking workshop for victim support providers was organized in December 2017 with the aim to share experiences, know-how, common challenges, good practice and obstacles in establishing and functioning of victim and witness support, funding mechanisms and networking, cooperation and coordination of victim support in the selected Balkan countries.

The workshop gathered 35 victim support providers/practitioners from victim support services established in the prosecutors' offices and courts and/or civil society organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia. The idea was to establish dialogue and foster further networking among practitioners in the former Yugoslav countries, since they share the same heritage, their justice systems are similar, and they experience similar challenges in establishing victim support in their countries.



Capacity building and networking workshop in Belgrade, December 2017

The introductory presentations were given by Alma Taso Deljković and Sabina Hidanović (UNDP, Bosnia and Herzegovina), Tanja Tankosić (Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina,

Department for witness support) and Jasmina Nikolić and dr Sanja Čopić (Victimology Society of Serbia), followed by a vivid discussion, which suggested the following:

- There are differences in the current victim support in the region: Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia have more developed systems of victim support than Serbia and Macedonia, but all countries should work on improving victim support and increasing capacities of service providers.
- Countries in the region share almost the same trends in development of victim support: at the very beginning services were mainly focused on women and child victims of violence, as well as on some particular, most vulnerable groups of victims, including war victims.
- Support is provided by both civil society organizations and state institutions, which requires networking, cooperation and coordination of services.
- In all countries victim support organizations were initially project funded and later, in some countries changes occurred, in terms of state funding of some victim support services.
- Croatia's experience as an EU member state is particularly important for countries in the region regarding development of a victim support system within the EU accession process.
- There is a need for regional cooperation in more systematic way, e.g. through establishing regional platform for cooperation, including coordination mechanisms, model of sharing information and joint activities.
- Funding, networking and coordination of victim support are key topics important for further development of victim support services in the Balkan countries.

The workshop gave an overview of the organization of victim support in the region, which was, inter alia, used as a starting point in developing methodology for the comparative analyses of victim support in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro, which is presented in more details under activity 4.

The whole VDS conference, including the workshop content and its conclusions, received media coverage: daily magazine Politika, TV RTS, N1, and Kopernikus. Additionally, conclusions and other relevant information were posted on the VDS's web site www.vds.org.rs and shared through the social media (Facebook and Twitter).

Activity 3b: Advocacy and awareness raising with government and reaching out beyond Belgrade to regional centers

Output 3b.1. Short summaries from the regional meetings with conclusions and recommendations

Output 3b.2. Report on dissemination

Output 3b.3. Report on media and social media coverage

The MDTF-JSS overview of existing victim support services in Serbia revealed that the highest number of services for victims are available in Belgrade, while in other regions the availability of services varies, and some regions show a worrying absence of any services. Thus, there is a need to reach out beyond Belgrade and work on the promotion of victim support, raise awareness of key stakeholders on the local level about victims' rights and available services, and advocate for establishing dialogue, cooperation and network of all actors throughout Serbia in order to ensure equal accessibility of support services to all victims throughout the country.

This was achieved through working meetings with key stakeholders in six regional centres and in Belgrade.³ Participants were representatives of the Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Interior, Department for prevention and suppression of domestic violence; Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy; Republic Public Prosecutor's Office; representatives of social work centres, courts and prosecutors' offices; OSCE Mission to Serbia; Provincial Ombudsman; Republic Agency for peaceful settlement of labour disputes; Judicial Academy. Separate meetings were held with civil society organizations. Regional working meetings gathered around 130 participants in total.



Regional meetings in Novi Sad, 15 May 2018, and Kragujevac, 9 May 2018

The aim was to present the project results: the Guides and the Interactive online map of victim support services, and to initiate networking and cooperation on the regional and local level in order to facilitate referrals and enable equal access to victim support for all victims (to identify examples of good practice, to identify existing gaps, problems, needs etc.).

³Meetings were organized in: Kragujevac (9 May 2018), Novi Sad (15 May 2018), Užice (17 May 2018), Niš (24 May 2018), Zaječar (25 May 2018), Belgrade (30 May 2018) and Šabac (26 June 2018). Meeting in Šabac was held on the proposal of the President of the Higher Court. This region is otherwise not covered with victim support services, so it was important to hold a meeting with representatives of different organizations.



Regional meetings in Belgrade, 30 June 2018, and Niš, 24 May 2018

Main discussion was focused on availability and the use of the Interactive online map as well as the ways for its wider use; the current situation related to the protection of victims on the local level; the issue of visibility and availability of assistance for various categories of victims, as well as the models of networking and the use of existing resources in the protection of victims. Additionally, participants were encouraged to outline examples of good practice related to networking and other forms of cooperation between organizations. Main conclusions are developed around these topics, and are classified in three groups: current situation in regard victim support; networking, cooperation and use of existing resources at local and regional level, and visibility of victims and availability of assistance and support.

Victim support: current situation

- The issue of victim support is not systematically regulated in Serbia, which impacts accessibility of victim support and the quality of provided services.
- When speaking about victim support, practitioners mainly refer to providing support and assistance to victims of domestic violence and child victims.
- Informing victims about existing victim support services and establishing referral mechanisms need to be regulated.
- Stable funding of civil society organizations, as well as of state services is an important issue, which impacts sustainability of services.
- In some institutions (centre for social work, prosecutor's office, court) practitioners who work on victim support are overburden with a large number of cases on which they work, meaning that they are not involved in victim support only.
- Evaluation of victim and witness services in the courts and prosecutors' offices needs to be done, which should serve as a guide for further development of these services, but also for expanding them to basic prosecutors' offices and courts.
- Younger professionals, in particular judicial and prosecutorial assistants, should be the bearers of future activities of protecting and supporting victims in the criminal justice system. Thus, it is necessary to organize separate meetings for them in order to raise their awareness about victims' rights and services for victims.
- It is necessary to pay attention to and care for employees who work directly with victims in order to prevent burnout.

Networking, cooperation and use of existing resources at local and regional level

- Examples of good practice in networking and cooperation on the local level primarily relate to domestic violence cases. This can serve as a model for cooperation in other matters as well.
- Cooperation among institutions on the local level is good, but it is largely based on personal contacts and existing resources that are insufficient. Thus, it is necessary to establish clear referral mechanisms.
- It is evident that unique resource centres for victim support are missing. They could provide information and refer victims to specialized services and they should be available 24/7.

Visibility of victims and availability of assistance and support

- Not all the victims are equally visible.
- There is a lack of general victim support services.
- There are not enough civil society organizations, particularly in certain parts of Serbia, while resources in state institutions are insufficient.
- There is a lack of services for elderly and children, especially services for supporting victims of peer violence (bullying).
- The number of organizations that help indirect victims, such as families of those killed or those who were injured in traffic accidents are insufficient.
- Organizations that provide free legal aid are missing.

Conclusions were sent to all meeting participants, including policy makers, and they were used for drafting recommendations, presented at the end of this report, which will be further used for advocacy for victims' rights and establishing national victim support system in Serbia.

Regional meetings proved to be useful tool for networking and establishing better dialogue and cooperation among relevant stakeholders at the local level, as well as for establishing cooperation with the VDS, who could provide assistance and support when victim support services are missing, who could be consulted in certain cases, etc. Thus, a certain number of victims were referred to the VDS victim support service after the regional meetings, which could be considered as a positive practice of established cooperation.

Regional meetings received rather good media coverage: TV station with national frequency – RTS, and local TV stations - RTV5 Kragujevac, TV5 Užice, TV Zona Plus Niš and TV Šabac, local radio stations - Radio Luna Užice, and local newspapers - Kragujevac newspapers. Information about the meetings were posted on the website of NGOs IzKrug - Vojvodina and Žene za mir-Leskovac. Lastly, all meeting reports are available at the VDS's web site, Facebook and twitter, as well as through the MTRDF JSS's web site.



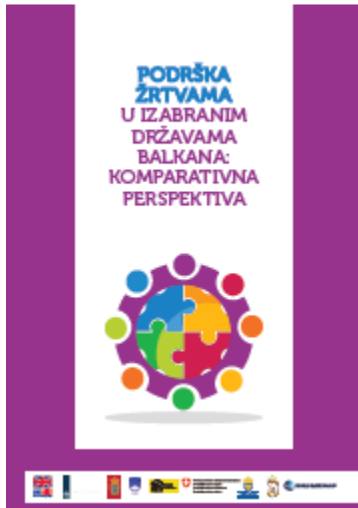
Interviews for national and local TV stations, Regional meetings in Kragujevac, Užice and Belgrade

Activity 4: Comparative analysis and benchmarking of victim support systems in the selected Balkan countries

Output 4.1. Research report – printed in 200 copies

Output 4.2. Short summaries of the findings with examples of good practice

Output 4.3. Report on dissemination



Comparative analysis of victim support is prepared based on the research, which examined organization and functioning of victim support in the selected Balkan countries: Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia. Selected countries share the same legal heritage, their justice systems are similar, and they experience similar challenges in establishing victim support. Experience of Croatia, as the last state to join the European Union (EU) (2013), is relevant for other countries in the Balkan region, which are in the process of negotiations on the accession to the EU (Serbia and Montenegro), have the status of a candidate country (Macedonia) or are potential EU candidate country (Bosnia and Herzegovina), and are therefore obliged or committed to harmonize their legislation, policy and practice with the EU acquis in order to ensure that victims of crime receive necessary

information, support and protection.

The research was based on triangulation of data collected by qualitative analysis of the normative framework and other written material on victim support systems in the selected countries and a survey, which consulted 127 victim support services in the observed countries.

The EU Directive on establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (Victims' Rights Directive) served as a framework for the comparative analysis. The focus was on the following aspects: defining the term 'victim' in the criminal legislation, defining victims' rights in the criminal legislation, victim's right to receive information, and victim's right to access confidential victim support services free of charge, before, during and for an appropriate time after criminal proceedings.

Except in Croatia and Macedonia, the term victim is not defined in the criminal procedure codes of other observed countries. In Croatia, and partly in Macedonia, the victim is a separate procedural subject. In all countries encompassed by the analysis victim's participation in the criminal procedure is linked to the institution of the injured party. Introducing the term 'victim' and making a clear distinction from the notion 'injured party' enables victims to be recognized as separate process entities. This is important for respecting rights and protection that should be equally granted to each victim, regardless of his/her subsequent participation in the criminal proceedings in the capacity of an injured party.

In defining victim's rights, Croatia has gone far away, due to the transposition of the Victims' Rights Directive into its national legislation. This should be followed by other countries in the region as well.

Right to receive information from the first contact with a competent authority is crucial for enabling victims to access other rights; nevertheless, this right is not recognized in all assessed countries. The obligation to provide victims information is foreseen in the criminal legislation of Croatia and Macedonia, which is a direct consequence of recognizing the victim as a separate entity within the criminal procedure code. In other countries, obligation to notify victim of his/her rights refers only to procedural rights when a victim participates in the criminal procedure in his/her capacity of an injured party.

Victim support services are recognized as key mechanisms for enabling victims to access their rights and assistance and in all observed countries support is provided by civil society organizations and the state services. As for the state services, they mainly refer to victim and witness support services within the prosecutor's offices and/or courts, and safe houses or shelters in the social welfare institutions. Only in Macedonia there are no victim and witness support services within the judiciary.

State services provide very specific and focused services, which are limited to very narrowly determined users and for a very limited period of time: support to victims in their capacity of injured parties and/or witnesses during criminal proceedings and providing safe accommodation to women and child victims of violence.

Civil society organizations provide a wider range of services which are often specialized and targeted to specific vulnerable groups, but they still have more inclusive approach, which enables victims to get more forms of assistance at one place. Additionally, civil society organizations often provide services outside of their premises, they have mobile teams and work after the working hours, which is relevant for accessibility of support and meeting victims' needs in a proper way.

Both civil society organizations and state services play an important role in delivering victim support in all observed countries. Therefore, it is necessary that finances, standards and policies of victim support are equally developed in both sectors.

There are few general victim support services in the selected countries. This category mainly refers to victim and witness support services in the courts and/or prosecutors' offices, whose services are limited. An example of good practice of offering general victim support is the establishment of a national free line for victims in Croatia. The analysis also revealed that there is a small number of specialized support services for child victims in all observed countries.

Support is mainly available to specific type of victims, in particular to victims of violence: domestic violence, sexual violence, trafficking in human beings, war crimes and hate crimes. These findings reflect the process of development of victim support that followed the same trend in all observed countries.

Victim support is most often provided locally: in the region or place where the organization is located. The geographical access to victim support services in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina is better compared to Serbia. A Croatian model can be used as an example of a good practice in establishing a national victim support system: through establishment of a partner network of civil society organizations in 13 counties, with the existence of a network of victim and witness services in the courts, a network of services has been created that provides equal access to support for all victims. Nevertheless, even in Croatia cooperation and coordination of services provided by the state, on one hand, and civil society organizations, on the other, remain rather challenging.

Electronic and printed media and the Internet are important outreach tools for informing victims of existing victim support services in all observed countries. The media needs to be further used to inform citizens about victims' rights and available services and a range of methods should be employed. An example of good practice of using the Internet is the *Interactive online map of victim support services in Serbia* <https://victimservices.eu>.

Referral of victims to victim support services is not systematically regulated in Serbia and Macedonia, while in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina it is a key way of informing victims about available victim support. Victims are referred to victim support by the police, prosecutors, courts and civil society organizations. It is therefore necessary to develop a referral mechanism between all institutions and organizations involved in victim support in other observed countries, including Serbia.

Victim support services in selected countries offer minimum support to victims as foreseen in the Victims' Rights Directive. The most frequent forms of assistance and support provided are: information, emotional support, and referral to other relevant service providers. However, the data also revealed that victims do not always receive complete information about their rights and available services.

Assistance and support are mainly offered through face to face contact and over the telephone, but using e-mails, internet and social media is gaining more attention.

Victim support is provided by paid staff and volunteers. Volunteering in victim support is more spread in Croatia than in other observed countries: apart from involving volunteers in victim support in civil society organizations, they are also involved in victim support in victim and witness services in the courts. This is an example of a good practice and may be used as a model in other countries as well. This could contribute to the increase of the number of victims and witnesses who could receive assistance and support.

The analysis revealed that not all the paid staff and volunteers who provide victim support in Serbia passed the training for working with victims. Situation is much better in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, where almost all paid staff in organizations covered by the survey have undergone training for working with victims. In these two countries, all or almost all volunteers passed the training for working with victims, too. As foreseen in Article 25 of the Victims' Rights Directive, both basic and specialist trainings, as well as entry and ongoing trainings should be provided to all paid staff and volunteers working with victims. This could ensure that

the rights of victims are respected, that victims receive adequate assistance and support and are protected from secondary victimization.

There is an instability in funding victim support services in all selected countries. This is especially evident when it comes to civil society organizations, which are largely dependent on project funding. This negatively impacts sustainability of services, continuity of their work and the level of services provided to victims on an annual basis. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure stable funding for victim support. The state should have a crucial role in developing necessary funding mechanisms in order to ensure equal access to services for all victims. In this regard, it is necessary to previously conduct a financial impact analysis in all countries encompassed by the research in order to estimate the need for this type of support by the state and the amount of resources needed to ensure adequate support for all victims.

To ensure better utilization of resources it is important to establish cooperation between state and non-state service providers and coordination of services offered. Networking and cooperation between state services and civil society organizations is one of the optimal models/strategies for establishing a national victim support system. Such an approach allows combining victim support within and outside the criminal justice system, providing general victim support and specialized services, and referrals among organizations and institutions involved in victim support. Such an approach requires a precise regulation of the model of coordination of victim support services at the national level.

Research report was printed in 200 copies and disseminated to relevant stakeholders in Serbia and other Balkan countries encompassed by the survey, including organizations which participated in the research. Electronic version was put on the VDS's and MTDF JSS's web sites and shared via social media. Research findings and examples of good practice were disseminated and discussed through presentations at conferences and workshops: 18th Annual Conference of the European Society of Criminology "Crimes Against Humans and Crimes Against Humanity. Implications for Modern Criminology" in Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) in August 2018; the workshop "Victim support in South-East Europe" organized by Victim Support Europe in Split (Croatia) in October 2018. Findings of the comparative analysis will be also presented and discussed and printed research reports disseminated at the IX Annual Conference of the Victimology Society of Serbia "New and Old Forms of Victimization: Challenges for Victimology Theory and Practice", which will be held in November 2018 in Belgrade. Finally, we plan to use the findings, conclusions and recommendations from the comparative analysis for further advocacy for victims' rights in Serbia, through meetings with key stakeholders and VDS's permanent activities.

Based on all project activities and achieved results, recommendations for the improvement of victim support in Serbia were drafted. They should guide future work on advocacy that should contribute to establishing national system of victim support in Serbia. Recommendations are classified into the following groups: a) Legal framework for victim support; b) Institutional framework for victim support: service providers, cooperation and coordination; c) Informing victims, referrals and providing assistance and support; d) Strengthening capacities of service providers and standardization of victim support, and e) Financing victim support.