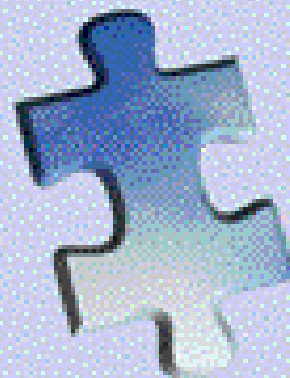


Crime and its impact on the victims



Criminality is the total number of criminal acts committed over a period of time in a certain territory.

Criminality is an omnipresent phenomenon! It is considered that the majority of people become either a direct, or an indirect victim of crime, i.e. of a specific criminal offence, at least once during their lives.

A criminal offence is a statutory illegal, socially dangerous form of behavior.
For example: *murder, rape, bodily harm, domestic violence, theft, robbery, threats, etc.*

Due to a committed criminal offence, the victim suffers material and immaterial damage:

- ◆ Physical pain (injuries),
- ◆ Psychological pain,
- ◆ Destruction or damage of property,
- ◆ Diminishing of property or prevention of its augmentation,
- ◆ Fear,
- ◆ A severe attack on his/her fundamental rights.

A criminal offence is an unexpected, unpredictable and traumatic experience for every victim.

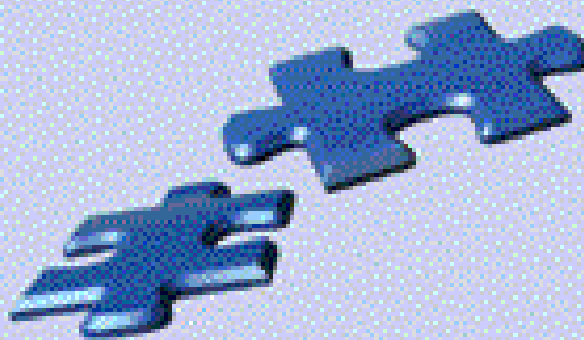
The victim loses control over his/her life, and feels scared and confused. His/her sense of security and assertiveness are perturbed and the victim wonders: Why did this happen to me of all people?

The first step in the process of a successful recovery of the victim from the traumatic experience is not blaming oneself for what happened! The victims have to recognize and experience themselves as such, and not as a culprit! However, the victims must also be recognized and acknowledged by the society and the state!

Therefore, the victims need help, counsel, support, protection and information

Unfortunately, the victims of crime in our social environment tend to go unnoticed as individuals in need of assistance and support and are, generally, not familiar with their rights, the procedure of reporting a criminal act, etc.

The results of the first and only International (Crime) Victim Survey that was conducted in Belgrade in 1996 revealed that the citizens of Belgrade were threatened by a high degree of crime. In spite of this, the majority of respondents involved in the Survey had had no contact whatsoever with any of the services for victim assistance. On the other hand, nearly three quarters of the respondents emphasized the need for the existence of such services.



About us

The Victimology Society of Serbia (VDS) is an independent, non-profit and non-governmental organisation, which was founded on 12th November 1997, with the aim to gather together as many humanistically oriented researchers and experts as possible, whose concern is to work on the development of victimology and promotion of the protection of victims of criminal offences, breaches of human rights, war and other forms of social victimization, irrespective of sex, religious beliefs or confessional affiliation, political views and other features of the victims.

VDS cooperates with the World Society of Victimology, the European Forum for Victim Services and other similar societies and associations. VDS is a member of the World Society of Victimology.

The aims and goals of VDS are as follows: scientific research of the phenomena and circumstances that lead to human victimization and finding ways of preventing and alleviating human victimization by inter-

disciplinary scientific methods; a

concerted effort towards the development of victimology as a scientific discipline and raising social awareness about the problems of the victims affected by various forms of crime; securing assistance to the victims of all forms of crime through a range of practical measures; pledging for the improvement of the legal position of the victims of all forms of crime; cooperation with scientific and expert organizations whose activities are directed towards similar aims and goals, especially with universities, institutes, state agencies and organizations, non-government organization, etc.

In order to attain its aims and goals, VDS organizes seminars, lectures, conferences and other similar gatherings, publishes a journal on victimization, human rights and gender - *Temida*, books and informative brochures, conducts research, monitors trials, organizes campaigns seeking changes of legislation and the amelioration of the position of victims in practice and provides direct assistance to the victims of criminal offences.

VDS Info and victim support: from an idea to reality



How it all started

The idea to start an assistance service for victims of crime, as an integral part of more comprehensive efforts toward the protection of rights of the victims of crime, has been part of the Victimology Society of Serbia plans since the very beginning. Also, the starting of the victim support service is a logical continuation of the VDS activities over the first five years of its existence, which primarily consisted of efforts directed at improving the victims' positions on a more general level. This is best illustrated by the fact that the citizens have begun addressing the Victimology Society, seeking miscellaneous information, inquiring about their rights or asking for other forms of support and concrete assistance in dealing with the judicial and other state organs, and also by the fact that other organizations have started directing them to us in such situations. We were therefore motivated to conceive a project to prepare and found a service for assistance to victims of crime.

The changes that have taken place in the country, and, in particular, the change of attitude of state organs towards non-governmental organizations and opening up to Europe and European standards represent an important precondition for the beginning of

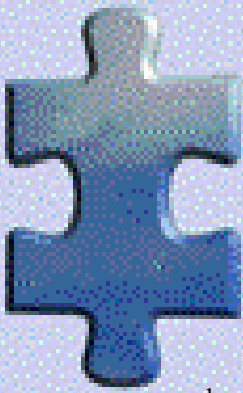
our activities in the direction of starting such a service for victims that has never existed before in our country and that would take as a model other similar services worldwide.

The activities related to the starting of this Service started with a seven-day training course in London, in March 2002, which was organized for the four coordinators of the future Service (Vesna Nikolić-Ristanović, Ph.D, Sanja Čopić, M.A., Jasmina Nikolić and Ivana Vidaković) by the National Victim Support for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The training provided us with thorough theoretical and practical information about the British model of victim support services, the main feature of which is a broad inclusion of volunteers representing the local community and referrals of the victims provided by the authorities.

During our stay in Prague in May 2002, where we attended the Annual Conference of the European

Forum for Victim Services, we became acquainted with the activities of a similar service in an East-European country – Bily Krih Bespeci in Prague, the Czech Republic. Also, during the first six months of 2002, one of the present coordinators of our service, Sanja Milivojević, M.A.,



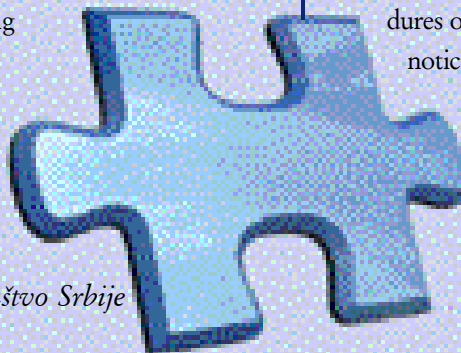


underwent practical training in the victim support service Safe Horizon in New York, U.S.A., where she acquired useful experience that she was able to transmit to the other coordinators, in the course of a workshop that was organized after she returned, in September 2002.



Model

VDS Info and victim support is the first service of this kind in Serbia, and it has taken as a model the existing service in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, which is considered to be the example of the best practice in Europe. The service centers on the victims of criminal acts, both male and female, and the essential services the victims are provided with are information on legal rights and ways of exercising them, emotional support and being referred to other services/organizations depending on their concrete needs.



Why did we decide to base our service on the British model?

- We believe that in Serbia, unlike some other countries, the citizens will be interested in volunteer work and extending help to the victims of crime.
- There already exists a broad network of specialized services in Belgrade that could be useful to the victims of crime, yet there is no organization that would inform the victims about their rights and direct them to these services.

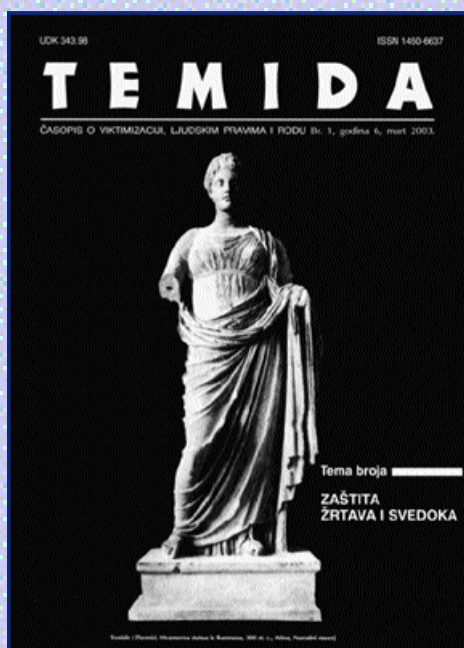
Preparations for establishing the service

Direct preparations for establishing the service VDS info and victim support comprised conducting a survey of the existing services that can be of help to the victims, gathering all information that can be useful for the victims and creating a database for the needs of the service, publishing the results in the journal *Temida*, preparation, printing and distribution of informative brochures, preparing a web page on the Internet, furnishing an office, establishing cooperation with the state organs and other non-government organizations and a public promotion of the Service.

Research

Research was conducted in the territory of Belgrade. Through interviews with 50 experts and activists of different services (police, prosecution, the judiciary, health care, centers for social work, non-government organizations), an analysis of the documentation and legislation that was available, we attempted to get acquainted with the competencies and procedures of work with the victims of crime. We took notice of the positive examples in practice and the new initiatives and drew attention to them, but we also pointed to the possibilities of increasing effectiveness and connecting these services.

The results of the research were published in the journal *Temida*, issue 1/2003.



The majority of our interviewees had identified the need for a specialized service for assistance to victims of crime and supported the idea of initiating such a service that would provide the victims with the necessary information and direct them to the available services, and also welcomed the cooperation and networking of different services, pledging

for the rights of the victims of crime and adequate social action.

Based on all information gathered in the course of this research, a database of relevant information, addresses and contacts was formed, that could be of help

to the victims of crime. Another positive effect of the conducted interviews was the introduction of our interviewees to the idea and project for the Service for assistance and support of the victims, and the potential spreading of the network of professionals who recognize, support and are ready to actively cooperate with such a service in the future.

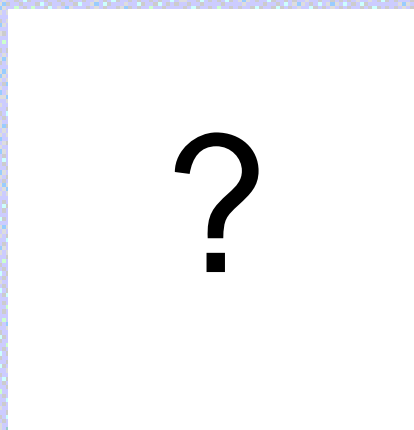


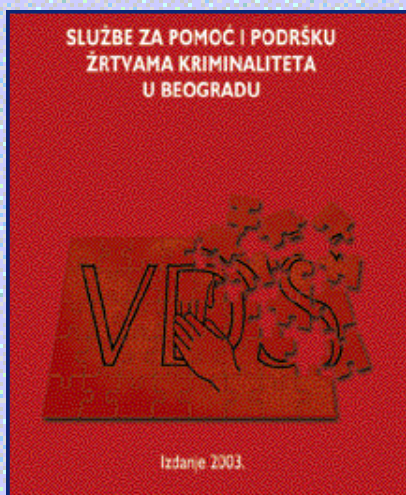
Informative brochures

In order to raise the victims' awareness about their position, feelings and needs, the rights they are entitled to and the way they can exercise them, as well as the services for assistance and support that are currently available, the service *VDS Info and victim support* has published two informative brochures: "*The Victims of Crime and Their Rights*" and "*Services for Assistance and Support to Victims of Crime in Belgrade*".

The brochure "*The Victims of Crime and Their Rights*" contains the basic information about:

- ◆ Who is considered to be a victim of crime,
- ◆ What phases the victims of crime usually undergo during the process of recovery,
- ◆ What expectations the victims of crime have from the state and its services,
- ◆ What rights the victims of crime enjoy and
- ◆ What the victims of crime can expect from the service *VDS info and victim support*.





In order to make the brochures accessible to as many victims as possible, they are being distributed to non-government organizations, the Secretariat of Interior Affairs in Belgrade, centers for social work, health care institutions, courts, public prosecutors' offices and to other agencies and institutions that get in touch with the victims of crime, i.e. whom the victims address; they can also be obtained directly from *VDS Info and victim support*, and from the Victimology Society of Serbia web site www.vds.org.yu

Cooperation of the service VDS info and victim support with the state services and non-government organizations

One of the indispensable preconditions for the functioning of the service *VDS Info and victim support* is establishing appropriate cooperation with the competent state services and non-government organizations that deal with victims of crime in their everyday activities. Experiences of many countries remind us that networking of the relevant organizations and connecting them with

state services and influential groups lobbying for legislative changes can bring about considerable and progressive changes in the upgrading of protection and assistance to victims of crime.


The Victimology Society of Serbia, within whose framework the *VDS Info and victim support* service operates, signed a Memorandum on Cooperation with the Section of the City Center for Social Work of Zemun, on 8th May 2003.

In September 2003, cooperation was also established with the Secretariat for Interior Affairs in Belgrade, which appointed officers in charge of cooperation with the Victimology Society of Serbia, and therefore with *VDS Info and victim support* as well. Cooperation with this state organ will operate in the following way: the Belgrade Secretariat for Interior Affairs will forward the *VDS Info and victim support* informative brochures to the service on duty, i.e. to the places where criminal offences are reported, and to other specialized services within the Secretariat. Their staff will be instructed how to deal with the victims and inform them about the existence of the service *VDS Info and victim support*, where they can seek assistance, counsel and other information.

In the course of preparing the database for *VDS Info and victim support*, an agreement on mutual cooperation was reached with non-government organizations that extend certain types of assistance to the victims of crime. Namely, it was agreed that the service *VDS Info and victim support* should refer the victims to certain non-government organizations, depending on the concrete needs, i.e., that these non-government organizations could direct individuals in need of assistance, counsel and information pertaining to the domain of *VDS Info and victim support* activities to us.

Lastly, cooperation has been established with Dr. Đorđe Alempijević and Dr. Slobodan Savić from the Institute for Forensic Medicine, who will directly attend to victims of criminal acts requiring physical





examination due to injuries inflicted in the course of the criminal act, in a manner that will not provoke secondary victimization.

Cooperation with state services and non-government organizations comprises the following:

- ♦ Informing victims about their rights and about the service *VDS Info and victim support* by distributing informative brochures, and
- ♦ Directing the victims who need assistance, support and information pertaining to the scope of activities of the service *VDS Info and victim support* to the Service.

International cooperation

Cooperation has been established with similar services for victim support in Belgium, France, Hungary, Slovakia, Austria and the Czech Republic. Cooperation has been strengthened with the National Victim Support in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and with the European Forum for Victim Services. Also, the application has been submitted for full-fledged membership of the Victimology Society of Serbia in the European Forum, where VDS has held the status of observer ever since it was founded.



Dr. Vesna Nikolić-Ristanović, president of the Victimology Society of Serbia and Sanja Čopić, M.A., General Secretary and one of the coordinators of the VDS info and victim support service, participated at the Eleventh Symposium of the World Society of Victimology, that took place from 13th to 18th July 2003 in Stellenbosch, South Africa. In her presen-

tion, Sanja Čopić spoke about the foundation and activities of the VDS info and victim support service, among other things. Also, Dr. Vesna Nikolić-Ristanović presented the VDS info and victim support service at the Second Annual Conference of the Criminology Association of Slovenia, held in Ljubljana on 27th and 28th September 2003.



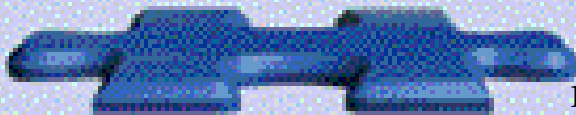
Public promotion

In the celebration hall of the City of Belgrade government building, the Victimology Society of Serbia promoted the service VDS info and support to victims of crime, on 3rd July 2003. Approximately seventy guests and a large number of journalists attended the promotion. The news was announced by the TV stations B92 and Studio B. Members of the Victimology Society of Serbia presented the Service on RTS and on the channel Info 24. Practically all daily newspapers published the news.

On behalf of the City Hall, which hosted the promotion, Mrs. *Radmila Hrustanović*, Mayor of Belgrade, delivered an opening address, in which she emphasized the importance of the Service for support to victims of crime for the local community:



“For every victim, a criminal act comes as an unexpected, unpredictable and traumatic experience. The victim expects the state to provide a timely reaction of the competent agencies, assistance and the resolution of the case.





It is therefore the obligation of every democratic society to provide protection for its citizens, to alleviate the consequences of the criminal act, to understand the problems and suffering of the victim and to ensure the implementation of their rights.

One of the ways to do this is by setting up services for victim support.

Such services already exist in practically all the global metropolises: London, New York, Paris, Berlin, Sydney... In our country, and in Belgrade in particular, there are a large number of governmental and non-governmental institutions that, in one way or another, provide help for the victims of specific forms of crime. However, the existing services mainly assist women who are victims of violence, and so far there has been no service that victims of other forms of crime, including men, could address. Also, we lacked a service that would function as a data pool center that could also refer the victims to other relevant services.

The purpose of the VDS Info and victim support service we are promoting today is to help the citizens who have suffered a criminal act to obtain the necessary information about their rights and about the institutions and organizations that can provide assistance, and efficient and simple way, and to lend them the indispensable emotional support.

Setting up a service for victim assistance means that the citizens are being sent a clear message that they are not alone in the difficult moments after a criminal act has taken place. Our city has been aspiring for a long time to join the group of large, developed metropolises of world, not only in view of its size, but according to other distinctive features as well. I have no doubt that, by establishing such a service, which will take care of those citizens who become victims of crime, we will take another big step toward achieving this goal”.

Dr. Vesna Nikolić-Ristanović, President of the Victimology Society of Serbia, Snežana Savić, judge of The District Court in Belgrade, colonel Petko Bošković, Chief of Staff of The Border Police Department for Foreigners and Administrative

Affairs of the Belgrade Secretariat for Interior Affairs and **Katie Zoglin**, legal advisor for gender issues in the American Bar Association, Legal Initiative for Central and Eastern Europe, addressed the audience.

In her address, Vesna Nikolić-Ristanović said:

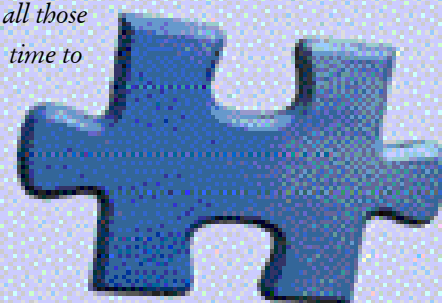
“The service for victim assistance VDS info and victim support came into being as part of a more comprehensive effort of the Victimology Society of Serbia for the protection of rights of the victims of crime.



The commitment of a criminal act entails material and consequential damage for the victim, or both. Besides, the victim may suffer physical injury and psychological harm. In these situations, psychological damage is frequently related to physical injuries, although nonviolent criminal acts may also inflict psychological harm. All these are consequences of primary victimization that cause a whole range of problems to the victim (for example, financial, health and family problems, problems in the workplace, etc.). In addition to primary victimization, the victims of crime are usually also exposed to secondary victimization, which means the aggravation of primary victimization through a negative reaction of the social environment and inadequate or even erroneous reaction of the prosecuting officials.

In the society as a whole, a tendency is often present to underestimate the victims and to persuade them that the criminal act was committed due to their fault. We hope that VDS Info and victim support will curb such attitudes toward the victims and secondary victimization in general, and that it will help strengthen the general position of the victims of criminal offences, especially when they appear as witness in courts of law. We expect to achieve good cooperation with the police and other state organs, and to continue our successful cooperation with other non-governmental organizations.

I should like to thank all those who have dedicated their time to talking with our associates in the data-collecting



process, and all of you who have gathered on this occasion and expressed interest for our service. Finally, let me thank the Open Society Fund and The European Union Commission for the financial support they gave us in preparing and establishing this service, as well as our hosts, The City Hall and The Mayor of Belgrade, Mrs. Radmila Hrustanović, for making it possible for us to hold the promotion of our service in these beautiful premises.«

Judge *Snežana Savić* of The Belgrade District Court addressed the audience on behalf of the judicial organs:

“Although victimology is still a fledgling in our society, its first results are very conspicuous in our

Penal Law system. They are reflected in the alteration of the description of some criminal offences, in the codification of new criminal offences and in respect of the changed position of the victim during the criminal proceedings.

However, besides legislative changes, a whole range of additional measures ought to be undertaken during the criminal proceedings in order to protect the position of the injured party and to avoid damaging the victim repeatedly. In some countries, for example in England, the plaintiff is accommodated in a separate room, separated from the defendant and his/her family, becomes familiar with the courtroom before the beginning of the trial, etc.

Another important aspect is the judge’s attitude towards the victims during the trial. They should be approached with all due respect of their personality and by expressing compassion. This is beneficial to their emotional stability and relieves them of the fear, which, in turn helps obtain a comprehensive statement which, combined with other conclusive evidence, contributes to a faster establishing of the truth and punishing the crime.

It is therefore necessary to provide further training for the judges and develop their sensitivity, with full respect of the profession. In my opinion, The Victimology Society of Serbia could be of great help in overcoming such problems. Also, I think that the Service



VDS Info and support to victims of crime plays an important role in upgrading our judicial system and providing protection for the victims”.

Colonel *Petko Bošković* addressed the

audience on behalf of the Police. He spoke about the importance of the *Service VDS Info and support to victims of crime* for the victims of human trafficking.

“In April 2003, the Law on Amendments of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia was enacted, proscribing in article 111b the criminal offence of human trafficking.

In the course of this year, 23 victims of human trafficking have been identified in the territory of Belgrade, as part of regular activities on stamping out crime. Out of this total number, there were 12 Moldavian women, one Rumanian woman, 2 Ukrainian women and 8 Chinese citizens. All of them were taken care of through the IOM program of reintegration and repatriation of victims of human trafficking. Also, 15 female foreign citizens were identified as suspected victims of human trafficking, and believed to have been transferred over the territory of Montenegro and sold to individuals in Italy and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The INTERPOL has been informed about these cases as part of an effort to find them.

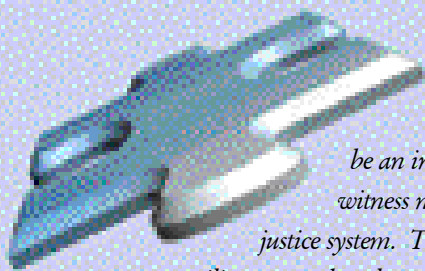
Katie Zoglin spoke about the importance of the Services for victim assistance in general, and particularly in cases of domestic violence:

As a prosecutor in the United States, I learned that victims of domestic violence have

different needs than those of victims of stranger on stranger violence. Domestic violence cases are among the more difficult cases to prosecute. They involve many more issues than robberies and assault cases where the victim does not know the perpetrator.

Victims of domestic violence may change their testimony or be less willing to testify, not because the crime did not occur, but because of other considerations. For example, financial concerns, physical safety, the welfare of the children, fear of retaliation, and fear of society’s reaction may impact a victim’s willingness to call the police or to cooperate in criminal prosecutions.





In addition, court can be an intimidating place for any witness not familiar with a criminal justice system. The surroundings are unfamiliar, cases take a long time to be processed, and legal rules and procedures are foreign. Victims need to repeat their stories over and over. As a result, victims are often reluctant to cooperate. Those were the main reasons that led to organizing victim support services in America.

Victimology Society's booklet is an excellent example of an important resource for victims of domestic violence. Although victims often are generally aware that there are shelters or hotlines, all too frequently they do not have the specific information about how to contact particular organizations for these services. Victimology Society's resource book makes this vital information available to the community. Victimology Society has played a valuable role in advocating for and supporting the rights of victims of domestic violence and should be praised for its important work."

Activities of the VDS info and victim support

VDS Info and victim support began its operation in April 2003 as an experimental program in Belgrade, with the idea to spread and replicate in the long term in the territory of all district courts in Serbia.

In the period from 1st April until 1st September 2003, 51 telephone calls were recorded from 23 victims of versatile forms of victimization. After the public promotion of the Service on 3rd July 2003, the number of calls increased sharply – in the period between 3rd and 31st July, 27 citizens' calls were recorded. This intensified number of calls is related to the media coverage of the promotion of the Service – a large number of victims actually found out about the VDS Info from the media. Three cases were referred to us from other non-governmental organizations (AŽIN, The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights) and several cases were directed from governmental institutions and services (The Ministry for Internal Affairs).

The victims predominantly contacted the Service VDS Info and victim support by telephone. In two cases, the victims came to VDS premises.



The coordinators of VDS Info and victim support have, in accordance to the mission and the aims of the Service, offered the victims the possibility to remain anonymous if they chose to do so. Nevertheless, only six persons who contacted us did not wish to introduce themselves.

The reasons for contacting the victim support service were:

- ◆ Domestic violence (7)
- ◆ Threats (40)
- ◆ Fraud (3)
- ◆ Sexual offences – rape, indecent assault (3)
- ◆ Robbery (1)
- ◆ Treats to personal security by fire arms (1)
- ◆ Racketeering (1)
- ◆ Other (3)

In most cases, the victims only wished to talk to someone about their problems.

At the end of the conversation with the VDS Info and victim support coordinator, one woman said that she did not even have “a shoulder to cry on” and thanked us for listening to her.

The age of the victims varies, but in the majority of cases, we were addressed by middle-aged or senior citizens.

In most cases, the victims were women (either calling the VDS Info themselves, or someone else – a parent or friend – calling on their behalf), whereas in seven cases victims were men.

Before they addressed the Service, most of the victims had tried to find a solution to their problem and had therefore sought help in state institutions or other non-governmental organizations.

Also, the majority of the victims knew exactly what they needed, i.e., the form of assistance they required, but they did not know where to apply for it. In several cases, the client sought one type of assistance and then forgot about it completely, satisfied with the received emotional support.

In one case, the coordinator expressed her observations in the following way: “We spoke for about 40 minutes. It was obvious that she felt relieved having related her problem to someone. At the end, she thanked me and said that we would stay in touch.”



Depending on the victims’ needs, they were further directed to state institutions or other non-governmental organizations (in cases when they required legal, psychological or psychiatric assistance, they were directed to the existing

non-governmental organizations that provide this type of assistance (Justicia, IAN), in case of violation of human rights – to the Humanitarian Law Fund and the Helsinki Committee, and when there was a need for Police intervention – to the competent police stations.

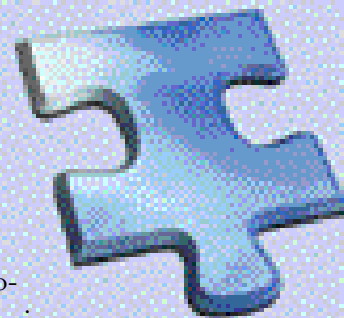
One of the clients told our coordinator that he had “not spoken about what had happened so thoroughly and extensively” even with his own wife.

The conversations with the victims usually lasted between 20 and 40 minutes.

A woman who had been a victim of robbery said, at the end of her conversation with the VDS Info coordinator, that she “would love to become a member of the Service and help the victims” because she knew what it was like to be a victim and, being a strong person who does not give up easily, she would like to “block their way”.

Endeavors to alter the legislation

Endeavors to bring about legal amendments that would have a bearing on the victims of crime have been one of the central activities of the Victimology Society from the onset. This is understandable, in view of the fact that good laws are crucial precondition for effective protection of victims of crime. Those endeavors were primarily focused on the Criminal Code, Family Code and the Code on Administrative Offences, pledging for the adoption of a new provision about human trafficking as criminal offence, provisions concerning the possibility of delays during deportation and impunity of the victims of human trafficking for illegal migration and prostitution, a better protection of victims as witnesses in crimi-



nal procedures, the introduction of a separate provision about domestic violence as administrative offence, and providing for protective measures forbidding the perpetrator access to the victim. Also, over this period, as part of the campaign *Amnesty for Victims*, we pledged for pardon for the women who, as victims of violence, took the lives of their molesters while defending themselves from violence.

As a result of our efforts and owing to the support of a large number of women’s groups and non-government organizations and the Social-democratic party, some of our efforts have reaped results: the criminal act of human trafficking has

been entered in the Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia, provisions on domestic violence and protective measures for perpetrators have become part

of the legal draft of the Family Code, and by decree of acting President of the Republic, the first woman, victim of violence, has been pardoned.



Web site

The newly opened web site of the Victimology Society of Serbia contains basic information about VDS – background, activities, publications and much more.

VISIT US at www.vds.org.yu

The home page contains information about the most recent and current events and activities, such as:

- ◆ Conferences,
- ◆ Promotions,
- ◆ Legal changes,
- ◆ Campaigns,
- ◆ Letters of support, etc.

The menu “*On the organization*” offers information on our:

- ◆ History,
 - ◆ Mission
 - ◆ Goals,
- As well as:
- ◆ The VDS Statute,
 - ◆ The Annual plan of activities,
 - ◆ The Annual report and
 - ◆ Information about those who support our activities.

The site also contains publications of the Victimology Society of Serbia, the contents of the journal “*Temida*” and VDS promotional material.

- ◆ The menu “*VDS activities*” will inform you about:
- ◆ Lobbying and VDS proposals for changes of laws and legal practices,
- ◆ Monitoring of criminal proceedings,
- ◆ Research,
- ◆ Conferences,
- ◆ The service for victim assistance VDS Info and victim support and
- ◆ Education.

The site is illustrated with photographs, while a particularly interesting feature is the counter

indicating the daily number of visits and their frequency on particular days of the week and the countries they come from.

Statistics reveal that:

- ◆ From 28th February until 6th September, the VDS web site had 212 visitors;
- ◆ The highest frequency of visits was recorded on 4th July;
- ◆ Apart from the Internet users from Serbia and Montenegro, our site has been visited by users from the U.S.A., Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The United Kingdom, Cyprus, France and Norway.

Also, on our web site you can find useful links from the sphere of victimology and instructions how to contact VDS.

If you wish to join the Victimology Society of Serbia, you can do it by filling out the application form you will find on our web site and sending it to the VDS address – Kolarčeva 8, 11000 Belgrade.

Plans for the future

The plan of future development of VDS Info and victim support include:

- ◆ The development of a network of volunteers,
- ◆ Raising the victims’ awareness concerning their rights
- ◆ Raising the awareness of state officials about the victims’ rights
- ◆ Creating a network of local services for help and support to victims throughout the country

- ◆ Extending the activities of the service to support to witnesses and a broader circle of victims (e.g. to the families of killed persons and to children).
- ◆ A further development of cooperation with other services and
- ◆ A further development of legal and non-legal mechanisms for the protection of the victims’ rights.

In December 2003 in Belgrade, The Victim Support from

Belgium

will hold

training for train-

ers of future volunteers of VDS

Info and victim support. The

coordinator of the Belgian Service

Ilse Vande Walle will transmit to

us their experiences related to the

process of recovery of the victims

of criminal offences and the way

in which the volunteers of the

Service for victim support can



help them in this process.