



MEPs endorse basic rights for crime victims across the EU

Committees: Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs / Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

All crime victims will get the same basic rights across the EU and an assessment of their specific needs under a directive agreed by Parliament and Council and backed on Tuesday by the civil liberties and women's rights committees. Free support services, such as psychological help, will also be provided. Some 75 million people are victims of crime every year in the EU.

When crimes happen abroad, differences between cultures, languages and laws can create serious problems. The agreed text aims to ensure that whatever the crime - mugging, robbery, assault, rape, harassment, hate crime, terrorist attack, or human trafficking - and wherever it is committed in the EU, all victims enjoy the same basic rights in criminal proceedings, are treated with respect and dignity, are protected from repeat crimes or further victimisation, and have access to victim support services, justice and compensation. Victims will also be entitled to have their particular needs assessed.

"This directive is a great achievement for victims throughout the EU. Individually assessing the victim's personal characteristics and the circumstances of the crime will help to ensure that all victims are treated according to their specific needs. This directive also takes account of victims of serious crimes such as terrorism, human trafficking and organised crime", said the civil liberties committee rapporteur, Teresa Jiménez-Becerril (EPP, ES).

The women's rights committee rapporteur, Antonia Parvanova (ALDE, BG), commented: "Responding adequately to victims' needs, irrespective of the crime suffered and regardless of where they come from, is a major change which will benefit both citizens and national judicial systems. With this directive, the EU is closing gaps in the protection of victims particularly exposed to secondary victimisation, such as children or victims of gender-based violence".

Individual assessment

At the request of MEPs, all victims will undergo an individual assessment of their specific needs at the earliest opportunity. Depending on personal characteristics, such as age, gender, race, religion or sexual orientation, the nature and the circumstances of the crime, any person could have specific protection needs, says the agreed text, adding that individual assessments should be carried out several times during criminal proceedings to take account of any changes in the victim's situation.

Support services

The agreement will oblige member states to ensure that victims and their family members have access to free-of-charge, easily accessible and confidential victim support services (for example, psychological support, trauma care or legal advice) from the moment the victim suffers harm, during and after the conclusion of the investigation and trial and regardless of where the crime took place. Specialist support services should also be set up for victims with specific needs, such as victims of gender-based violence or children, it adds.

Clear information and translation

Press release

Victims will have to be informed, from their first contact with a competent authority, of their rights as defined in the directive, either orally or in writing, in simple and accessible language and in a language that they understand.

Victims will also be able to report the crime and take an active part in the criminal proceedings (interviews and court hearings) in a language that they understand. Interpretation and translation services will be made available to this end.

Children

Children's specific rights and needs will have to be taken into account in all cases and child victims will be given the opportunity to play an active role in criminal proceedings and to have their testimony taken into account.

Next steps

The agreed text will be voted in plenary on 12 September. The Council will also have to give its green light. Once the new rules are adopted, EU countries will have three years to transpose them into their national laws.

The directive was adopted by 79 votes to 1, with 1 abstention.

10.07.2012

In the chair: Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D, ES), Mikael Gustafsson (GUE/NGL, SE)

Procedure: codecision (first-reading agreement)

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