



## Pro.Vi. Protecting Victims' Rights – Capacity Building Fostering Awareness and Interdisciplinary Cooperation



Project partners met frequently online since January 2020 in light of COVID 19 travel restrictions.

The capacity-building phase of the Pro.Vi. project coincided with the global outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in the beginning of 2020. Face-to-face workshops and trainings with various professional groups had to be postponed, cancelled, limited or transferred to online activities. Also transnational meetings between partners and stakeholders needed to be changed to online formats. Despite these challenges, Pro.Vi. project partners managed to implement innovative capacity building activities around the following themes: promoting victim-sensitive approaches of first contact with police and other judicial authorities (Portugal), rethinking the approach to victims in the juvenile justice system

(Italy), foster the instrument of psychosocial assistance (Germany), raise awareness about the needs of victims of human trafficking as a highly vulnerable group (Romania) and promote psychological support for victims and strengthening interdisciplinary cooperation (Spain).

Apart from the concrete local outcomes as a consequence of project activities, partners developed a handbook for practitioners and European guidelines. The final conference that was planned to be held in Brussels was transferred into an online event featuring the Italian MEP Caterina Chinnici and the Spanish MEP Maite Pagazaurtundúa on October 23, 2020.

## Regional Interdisciplinary Workshops promoting Psychosocial Assistance in Criminal Proceedings – the Case of Schleswig-Holstein, Germany

Due to the federal system of governance in Germany, the project team of CJD Nord - in close cooperation with the Ministry of Justice of Schleswig-Holstein – decided to tailor the capacity-building process of the Pro.Vi. project to the state level of Schleswig-Holstein instead of targeting a national level. The project team further decided to place a thematic focus on the progress and challenges of implementing the new legislation on psychosocial assistance in criminal proceedings that was incorporated into German criminal law as a consequence of Directive 2012/29/EU.

### Geographical Scope

Within the state of Schleswig-Holstein there are 4 court districts: Flensburg (red), Kiel (blue), Lübeck (yellow), Itzehoe (green). It was therefore decided to choose the individual districts as a setting for capacity-building to allow for a maximum of customization towards local needs and conditions.



### Participants

Given the choice of this regional setting, the capacity building workshops in each court district included 4 different groups of professionals representing their respective court districts. The groups of participant included the following: judges, prosecutors, police, victim support organizations and psychosocial assistants. The number of participants in all 4 court districts ranged between 14 and 32 participants. In total, over 100 professionals participated in the capacity building activities. Despite the Covid 19 pandemic all workshops were held in person in line with the hygienic rules of the respective venue.

### Methodology

The capacity-building workshops were entitled: “Implementing the EU-Directive: Between Protecting Victims’ Rights and Adhering to the Requirements of Criminal Proceedings – the Example of Psychosocial Assistance”.

All workshops began with an overview of the key principles of Directive 2012/29/EU by the chief prose-

curator of the court district. In a second section of the meetings, interview findings of the Pro.Vi. project were presented that highlighted challenges in implementing the directive from both victims’ and stakeholders’ perspective. In particular, the “victims’ voices” constituted an effective tool of awareness-raising amongst the participants. Following these inputs the local team of psychosocial assistants presented their work, underlying principles and values and anonymized case studies. Finally, all participants engaged in an interdisciplinary discussion and developed recommendations for their local court district to further improve the implementation of victims’ rights – with psychosocial assistance constituting an important intersection between victims’ needs and the requirements of the judicial system.



### Outcomes

The goal of the workshops was to assess and increase the knowledge of victims’ rights but also to improve the understanding and awareness of the respective roles of each professional group and promote cooperation in the best interest of the victim. The evaluation of the workshops demonstrated that these objectives were successfully met. Professionals drew the following conclusions from the workshops (selection):



*“For the future I wish to see less legal changes but more trainings especially for judges.” (Lawyer)*

*„I will pay more attention to victims’s rights and will provide them with information on their rights upon the early investigation phase.” (Police)*

*„I will ensure that victims are informed about their rights and will follow-up if needed.“ (Prosecutor)*

Other concrete outcomes of the capacity-building process can be summarized as follows:

- Prosecutor's office has installed special point person for psychosocial assistance and has improved their approach to information sharing
- Prosecutor's office is planning interdisciplinary meetings with psychosocial assistants and also discussing anonymized cases
- Police department has planned extended interdisciplinary meetings with psychosocial assistants and staff from different police departments
- A new training module will be developed to train psychosocial assistants and expand the scope of trained professionals to address staff shortage
- Presentation of Pro.Vi. project as best practice example for the promotion of victims' rights at (online) meeting of the National Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection
- Presentation of the Pro.Vi. project and its interdisciplinary workshops on psychosocial assistance at the next (online) program conference of the German Academy of Judge (Deutsche Richterakademie)

For further information on the instrument of psychosocial assistance including training and quality standards please contact:

**Recht Würde Helfen – Institut für Opferschutz in Strafverfahren e.V.** (<https://www.rwh-institut.de/>) and **Bundesverband Psychoziale Prozessbegleitung** (<http://www.bpp-bundesverband.de/>).

## Capacity-Building Activities in Spain

Capacity building activities increase professionals' knowledge of the EU and national legal framework related to victims of crime and help provide victims with better support and services to address the psychosocial impact of victimisation. In Spain, before Directive 2012/29/EU, protection focused mainly on certain victims and some types of crime: victims of violent crimes, terrorism, gender-based violence and minor victims. In 2015, when the Directive was incorporated into the Spanish legal system, a key role was assigned to the public Support Offices for Victims of Crime in the protection system. These Offices, which have specialized staff, are located in court buildings and depend on the Ministry of Justice or the Autonomous Governments that have jurisdiction in the area of Justice.

### Focus Groups and Multi-Disciplinary Meetings

Capacity building activities were organised within the framework of the Project Pro.Vi., based on two focus groups in which professionals from different victim services participated: lawyers, psychologists, social workers and members of security forces. In these activities, communication channels and coordination between the different victim services were analysed as well as the potential improvement of the intervention model taking into account the needs of victims of crime, the difficul-



ties that professionals encounter in their practical work, lack of some resources and the new actions they might propose.

Later, in collaboration with the Secretary of Equality of the Galician Government and the Official College of Psychology, meetings were held with psychologists, social workers and other professionals. Most of these professionals work with victims of gender-based violence, trafficking in human beings, hate crimes, victims of vulnerable groups or victims in the field of juvenile justice. In these meetings it was observed that, although there are some action protocols, communication with other services is usually based on the personal relationships of each professional. This should be improved.

In the case of victims of gender-based violence, there are many protocols, but this does not happen with other types of victims.

Improving networking was also considered a key issue so that victims can access all existing resources, avoiding them having to move from one place to another. The broad roles that the law attributes to public victim offices and how they can play a crucial role in enhancing networking and facilitating access for all victims to existing resources are discussed. It was analyzed how the offices work in practice, how the victims are sent to the Offices, what are the victim profiles they receive, how they are given attention and how data is collected and evaluated.

The action protocols developed in other Autonomous Communities were studied to find out the most interesting issues that could potentially be incorporated into the Galician victim protection system. Coordination and communication between the Offices and other services is essential to provide

victims with adequate support and assistance. The participating professionals highlighted that the exchange of knowledge and good practices with the responsables of other Autonomous Communities was very interesting.

### **Dissemination and Follow-Up**

Following the capacity-building actions, two seminars on victims' rights were held with 138 participants. Representatives of the departments and Support Offices for victims of Galicia, Valencia, Catalonia, the Basque Country and Cáceres participated in these seminars. There were conferences by experts such as Prof. Dr. Ramón Arce and Ricardo Fandiño, psychologist. The work with the victims carried out by different types of professionals was presented by the representatives of the Professional Association of psychologists, lawyers, social workers and social educators. The work carried out by victims' associations and NGOs that support victims of gender-based violence, human trafficking, hate crimes and crimes against road safety was also explained.

## **Capacity Building intervention in Portugal**

According to research of the overall state of victims' protection in Portugal and to results from the interviews with stakeholders and victims, the UCP research team identified that the first contact with victims remains challenging in our national system of protection.

The first moment with crime victims is of extreme importance in any type of intervention. The first contact with victims can define and determine the settling of a relationship of trust, which allows the professional to manage which intervention to choose in each case, adapting it to the victim's needs with the highest quality possible (APAV, 2019). The service's quality in the first contact is also crucial to ensure the victim's decision is as conscious as possible, and for the initial procedural measures to proceed, which can also be decisive regarding a victim's permanence or withdrawal from the criminal process.



There is a group of professionals that, by virtue of the nature of their profession and the first line intervention they conduct, are more susceptible to being the first contact and bridging point between the victims and the judicial system. These first line intervention professionals may include security forces (e.g. police officers), physical and mental health professions and victim support professionals. All of them play an essential role in the identification and reporting of crimes, as well as in attending to, supporting, assisting, and referring of victims to more specialized services. Therefore, it is important that professionals are well-versed in intervention procedures and practical strategies related to technical and personal skills, attitudes, and behaviours to be adopted when in contact with victims.

Thus, based upon these facts, the Capacity Building intervention in Portugal has been applied to first line intervention professionals, as police officers and victims support providers.

### 1. Capacity Building – Model Development meetings

The first stage of CB Intervention entailed the collection of information about intervention models and the identification of potential interventions and good practices able to be re-adapted and transferred to new contexts. These meetings entailed working with stakeholders to define and develop the capacity building intervention. The model development meetings were conducted with victims’ support providers from Trofa city council victims’ support office.

The developed training model was outlined thinking of first line intervention professionals, including police officers, victims’ support providers, health professionals, psychologists, social workers, and others.

### 2. Capacity Building – Testing phase meetings

The CB Testing-phase meetings ended up being the training sessions of the intervention model outlined to first line professionals. This CB testing-phase was composed by 3 training sessions with first line intervention professionals, and the

main theme of the training was **“First Contact with Victims of Crime”**. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic situation, the meetings were conducted online, in UCP streaming platform.

The meetings counted on 26 registered participants (e.g. police officers; psychologists; social workers; criminal investigators) and each meeting was dedicated to specific training modules:

- Module 1: The role of first line professionals on intervention with victims of crime;
- Module 2: Forensic interview guidelines and techniques to question victims of crime;
- Module 3: The importance of Interprofessional and institutional referrals;

The trainings sessions was outlined to be accomplished by practical, including case discussions and roleplays, putting professionals’ skills in practice. Promoting group dynamics was a bit challenging due to online training, but we generated important discussions between participants and collected their contributions to future steps for the protection of victims’ rights.

## Progetto Azzurro – Revolutionizing the Approach to Victims within Juvenile Justice

Capacity building actions in Italy developed in close partnership with the Ministry of Justice, most notably the Public Prosecutor’s Office at the Juvenile Court of Naples and the Department of Juvenile Justice and Community, which has supported Pro.Vi since its inception.

This partnership enabled the re-thinking of how the juvenile justice system treats and thinks about victims of crime - whether adults or minors - culminating in the development of a dynamic multi-lingual website ([www.progettoazzurro.it](http://www.progettoazzurro.it)) for victims permanently hosted by the Prosecutor’s Office in Naples. Beyond representing an information point for victims of crime, partnerships were created with local actors such as: law enforcement for the creation of dedicated places for receiving victims of more serious crimes, victim organizations and associations as part of an effort to facilitate referrals including the promotion of a telephone hotline



for minors in need of assistance that also serves victims (CAM Telefono Azzurro)

The Covid-19 pandemic led to the re-structuring of in-person capacity building actions with the utilization of a series of ZOOM events that allowed for

the participation of over 500 professionals at each event include: state police and other law enforcement, judges, prosecutors, restorative justice professionals, and other criminal justice actors. During the course of four sessions, recognized experts and professionals covered:

- Recognition of the status as a victim
- The new perspective for victims of crime within criminal proceedings
- Caring for victims, dealing with for conflict
- Recognition of the dangers victims face and the role of prosecutors in civil settings

Video recordings are available on IPRS Youtube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLlAZQkm1HeBCY39Mtwb16A>

and the Progetto Azzurro website: <https://www.progettoazzurro.it/>



## Capacity-Building in Romania

2020 is going to remain in history for several negative events worldwide which have the potential of influencing the lives of millions of persons all over the world. However, 2020 has also been marked within the European Union by a positive development, namely the recognition of victims as active members of the civil society, the recognition of their rights and, most importantly, the recognition of the need to protect their rights. In this context, the West University of Timisoara (Romania), through the International Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Human Rights, alongside of the Pro Prietenia Arad Foundation and with the help of the National Agency Against Human Trafficking have organised a series of workshops, seminars and professional meetings within the EC-funded project Pro.Vi – Protecting Victims’ Rights.

After having conducted an extensive desk and field research to examine the extent to which the provisions of the “Victims’ Directive” establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, have been transposed into the national legislation, the Romanian research team has started to implement workshops and seminars to promote and steer the use, at grass root level, of the newly transposed provisions. Within the events organised tens of social workers, psychologists, lawyers, police officers and academics were trained with regards to the practical use of the national, generic victim support mechanism which is being under development currently. Further to these, the researchers have identified and promoted at local, regional and national level a best practice model identified through the research, which has the capacity of being transferable and

transposable from a specific and targeted group of beneficiaries to a broad and diverse group of beneficiaries.



The model identified and promoted was the **“anti-trafficking in persons working group”** (ATIPWG), a multidisciplinary, regional (Timis, Arad, Caras) taskforce, set up in order to be able to efficiently fight against human trafficking and address the needs of the identified victims in a specialised and dignifying manner. The taskforce is coordinated by the Timisoara Regional Center of the Romanian National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (NAATIP). The decision to collaborate in this form was on voluntary basis on behalf of the NGOs and it mostly took place during 2004. The springs of it were generated due to the lack of public institutions in charge for providing the whole spectrum of victim support services, the lack of public funding and the high need of victim support services for victims of human trafficking given the fact that during the last 10 years Romania is leading the statistics in Europe, as a top source country.

By means of such collaboration, the entire spectrum of services needed by victims of human trafficking is being provided by the specialised NGOs. Within the regular meetings the partners discuss the current gaps and the way in which NGOs/State institutions could fill them, difficult cases are analysed, national and international case referrals are presented, statistics on human trafficking are analysed and current tendencies are commonly identified, prevention campaigns are generated based on the identified tendencies, prevention campaigns are coordinated in order to avoid overlaps of subjects or places where they are implemented, new projects/initiatives are disseminated. The core principles based on which the ATIPWG is working are: Independent Facilitator Organization (NAATIP); Common Agenda of the participating institutions and NGOs, Shared Measurement Systems, Mutually Reinforcing Activities, Continuous Communication.

Once the responsible institutions will have created the legally foreseen national, generic victim support

services, the proposal of the Romanian researchers was to transfer this best practice model, alongside of the core elements of the National Identification and Referral Mechanism for Victims of Human Trafficking into the generic victim identification and support mechanism at national level. This was the core part of the national trainings and follow up meetings.

In these very difficult times for entire nations, the most vulnerable persons tend to become even more vulnerable. By means of having conducted the activities of the project, the Romanian research group has not only managed to promote a best working example but has also raised awareness on the rights and needs of victims of all crimes. While at first, the timing within COVID 19 pandemics raised a series of logistic challenges, it has eventually turned out that exactly this challenging timing has generated the perfect setting to discuss and keep specialists aware of the needs of such vulnerable groups.

## Pro.Vi. Final Conference on October 23, 2020



Pro.Vi held its final EU conference online on October 23rd, focusing on notable challenges to be addressed in order to achieve full implementation of the Victims' Directive. The event featured Italian MEP Caterina Chinnici, Spanish MEP Maite Pagazaurtundúa, both active in the drive to promote victims' rights in the EU, and Gemma Tuccillo, the Head of the Department of Juvenile Justice and Probation in Italy. Prominent experts from Italy, Germany,

Portugal, Romania, and Spain addressed key issues surrounding the challenges to assuring the rights of adult victims of juvenile offending, an issue not addressed by the Directive, and means of supporting victim participation in criminal proceedings.

Special focus was placed on two key issues: the development of communication tools for victims of juvenile offending in Naples, Italy that were made possible thanks to Pro.Vi and presented by Claudia De Luca, Deputy Prosecutor at the Juvenile Court of Naples; and the development of the psychosocial assistance model in Germany as presented by one of its founders, Ulrike Stahlmann-Liebelt, the Commissioner for Victim Support and Protection for the State of Schleswig-Holstein.