

Introduction to the EU project "Developing standards for the assistance to victims of terrorism"

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen!

- It is a pleasure for me to introduce you briefly to the EU commissioned project "Developing standards for the assistance to victims of terrorism". The project is part of the preparatory action for the victims of terrorist act program, and runs from 1 March 2007 till end of June this year.
- The topic of the project, and consequently of this seminar, is - sadly enough - more relevant than ever – having in mind the killing of innocent Israeli students at their school in Jerusalem last week.
- The European Forum for Restorative Justice was awarded the project, but from the very start it was self evident that for the realisation of the project, and for a good result, it was absolutely necessary to have good partners.
- As you probably know these good partners are
 - 1) the International Victimology Institute (INTERVICT) who is most generously hosting this conference,
 - 2) the Catholic University of Leuven (K.U. Leuven), Belgium
 - 3) the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence of the University of St. Andrews, UK and
 - 4) Victim Support Netherlands that currently also holds the chair of Victim Support Europe.
- The project is co-financed by the European Commission and the European Forum for Restorative Justice.

Tomorrow we will have the pleasure of being addressed by the Vice-president of the European Commission, Franco Frattini, representing Justice, Freedom and Security of the European Commission.
- The heightened awareness and consequences of terrorism for victims of terrorist acts have led to the inclusion of their needs in a number of international legal instruments of international bodies like the EU, the Council of Europe and the UN.

- Needless to say - these instruments are more or less abstract or include victims of terrorism under the broader heading of victims of crime in general.
This is why the European Commission has originated a preparatory action to support projects in favour of victims of terrorist acts in order to promote the European dimension of support actions in favour of victims.
- The particular relevance of restorative justice for victims of terrorism was asked for by the European Commission to be highlighted in the research. This is why the second day of the conference is dedicated particularly to restorative justice issues and victims of terrorism.
- The draft standards for assistance to victims of terrorism that will be presented at this final conference, is the outcome of a literature review and two working seminars held at the K.U. Leuven. The literature review was undertaken by researchers at the K.U. Leuven and INTERVICT, supported by a steering committee of experts composed of the partners involved in the project. Academic experts, practitioners and policy makers participated actively in the two mentioned seminars.
- The focus of the literature review and the standards is on the aid and assistance to victims of terrorism at a European level, in the fields of psycho-social assistance, access to justice, administration of justice and compensation – and - also including the possible role of restorative justice principles and practices in dealing with victims of terrorism.
- The overall goal of the project is for the standards to serve as a basis for the further development of services for victims of terrorism in Europe. The standards will, naturally enough, be endorsed by the European Forum for Restorative Justice and Victim Support Europe at the end of the project.
- More important is that the standards are concrete enough to form a firm basis for further development of concrete practices in the societal fields I have just mentioned. To further this end, I invite all the participants to be active in the workshops, to exchange good practices – and bad –in order to learn from each other.
We are thus urging you to give your opinion on the draft standards both in the workshops and tomorrow in the plenary session.

Before I finish, I would like to present the hard-working research team for you:

Ms. Ines Staiger from the Institute of Criminology at the K.U. Leuven and the European Forum for Restorative Justice, Belgium

Dr. Rianne Letschert, International Victimology Institute Tilburg, The Netherlands

Mr. Antony Pemberton, International Victimology Institute Tilburg, The Netherlands

Ms. Karin Ammerlaan, International Victimology Institute Tilburg, The Netherlands

And the supportive Steering Committee Members:

Prof. Dr. Ivo Aertsen, Institute of Criminology of the Catholic University Leuven, Belgium

Prof. Dr. Jan van Dijk, International Victimology Institute Tilburg, The Netherlands

Prof. Dr. Letizia Paoli, Institute of Criminology of the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium

Mr. Rob Sardemann, Victim Support Netherlands, The Netherlands

Prof. Dr. Alex Schmid, Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence of the University of St. Andrews, UK

Dr. Inge Vanfraechem, Board of the European Forum for Restorative Justice, Belgium

- So – it only remains for me to wish you a constructive conference!

Good luck!