



European Forum for Restorative Justice¹

Position Paper on the revision of the restorative justice provisions of the Victims' Rights Directive

The European Forum for Restorative Justice (EFRJ) welcomes this open consultation on the revision of the Victims' Rights Directive (hereinafter VRD) and would like to present its position and recommendations, in particular on the revision of the restorative justice (hereinafter RJ) provisions of the VRD, and draw the attention of the European Commission (EC) to the importance of RJ in all matters that involve victims of crime.

¹ The European Forum for Restorative Justice (EFRJ) is the leading European network for supporting the development of restorative justice in Europe. Founded in 2000 at the KU Leuven Institute of Criminology, the EFRJ is a membership organisation that currently comprises around 400 members (either individual or organisational), from Europe and beyond. Since 2020 the EFRJ is part of the EU Victims' Rights Platform.





SUMMARY

To ensure that the benefits of RJ and safeguards for victims are realised, an effective and equal access to RJ services should be guaranteed for all victims of crime who freely want to access RJ.

(1) Policy Option 1: Right to access to restorative justice

The aim of the EFRJ concerning the revision of the Victims' Rights Directive (VRD) is to provide a right to access RJ services, at any time and in any type of case. This at minimum entails:

- o that the access to RJ should not depend on offender² or offence characteristics but on the needs of the victim and their voluntarily willingness to participate in a restorative process – in case the RJ process takes place as diversion or is connected to the criminal justice procedure, criteria on the offence and the offender can be taken into account by the judiciary during the decision on the effects of a successful RJ process, but not as an accessibility criterion for victims;
- o that RJ services should be accessible in all stages of the criminal procedure (including after sentencing and after a sentence has been served);
- o the right to receive full information about the nature, availability and accessibility of RJ services;
- o effective and systematic information and referral procedures taking into consideration the voluntary nature of the process and the importance of victims receiving accurate information directly from restorative justice services;
- o the right to an individualised, case-by-case assessment with, and ongoing support from, competent RJ services. We believe that it is more beneficial for victims if not legal authorities, but RJ services should assess the appropriateness of RJ in each case;
- o RJ services need to be available in each EU MS and need to be governed by recognised standards;
- o RJ services should be free of charge.

Research shows that a right to access RJ services empowers victims in taking an active role, asking their questions (including those that can only be answered by the offender) and make the offender face and take responsibility for the harm caused, to receive restoration according to the victims' needs, to experience justice and to find closure (and to heal). In that sense,

² The term 'offender' refers to a person who has been convicted of a crime. However, as for the VRD, we also refer to a suspected or accused person before any acknowledgement of guilt or conviction, and it is without prejudice to the presumption of innocence.





RJ can help to give back to the victim control and power, while it is not a soft option for the offender at all.

Policy Option 2: RJ as a generally available service

In case establishing a right of access for victims to RJ proves to be too ambitious at this moment, we propose to amend the VRD to include RJ that should be a generally available service for victims at all stages of the criminal justice process and for all types of crime. This entails:

- o RJ services are available in all EU MSs and governed by recognised standards;
- o Victims can contact and initiate a RJ process directly at the RJ service parallel or after the criminal justice procedure;
- o the right to receive full information about the nature, availability and accessibility of RJ services, ideally directly from restorative justice services;
- o RJ is offered free of charge.

Several countries in Europe already provide RJ programmes as a general service, i.e. not restricted by certain legal preconditions or to certain stages of the criminal procedure, thus providing RJ as a *de facto* right by virtue of it being available in all cases³. Several other countries (and regions) are currently approving and introducing new legal frames, policies or service capacities introducing RJ as a generally available service⁴. We believe that the EU should assist and encourage these and further developments, as already strongly done by the Council of Europe (CoE) and supported by the Ministries of Justice of the CoE MSs (see below for more information on recent developments at the CoE level).

Our position builds on the EFRJ Position Paper on the Evaluation of the Restorative Justice provisions of the Victims' Rights Directive (available [here](#)) that we submitted to the EC in October 2021 in response to the EC-promoted open consultation. Our evaluation was based on information collected via a survey that the EFRJ conducted in 2021. The survey was sent to different target groups (RJ service providers, practitioners and policy makers). We received 45 responses covering 18 European countries.

The present position paper presents concrete recommendations on how RJ could be included in the revised VRD. Our arguments are evidence-based and supported by relevant international (legal and policy) documents from the CoE and United Nations.

³ Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden

⁴ Italy, Estonia, Schleswig Holstein, Navarra, Ireland, Scotland and Northern Ireland





INTRODUCTION

Developments in the European and International Policy Framework on RJ

With the adoption in 2012 of the European Union (EU) Victims' Rights Directive (Directive 2012/29/EU) (VRD) and in 2018 of the Council of Europe's (CoE) landmark [Recommendation on restorative justice in criminal matters \(CM/Rec\(2018\)8](#)), the restorative justice field witnessed new international legal instruments and guidelines that demonstrate a growing consensus of the international community for a general applicability of RJ in criminal matters and beyond.

In 2020, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) published the [Second Edition of the Handbook on Restorative Justice Programmes](#), integrating new developments, including the potential of RJ in meeting the needs of victims of serious crimes.

In June 2020, the European Commission adopted the [EU Strategy on Victims' Rights \(2020-2025\)](#) that recognises the role of RJ to achieve its first objective: empowering victims of crime, for them to participate in criminal proceeding and to recover. It also states "*restorative justice services provide victims with a safe environment to make their voice heard and support their healing process*". It considers that "*the potential benefits of such services depend on the availability, accessibility and quality of restorative justice services in the Member States*".

The [2019 Milquet Report "Strengthening victims' rights: from compensation to reparation"](#) embraces a holistic move away from compensation, and towards recognition, restitution, support and care, as valuable reparations to support victims to cope with, and recover from the harm caused by crime. In this regard, the Special Adviser recommended: to include in EU rules (for instance a revised Victims' Rights Directive) or to recommend the use of a pre-trial mediation/restorative justice, noting the benefits to victims of using restorative justice to divert cases from court, up to and including those which might receive a five year custodial sentence.

We would like to draw particular attention to a very recent document that demonstrates the willingness of all the Ministries of Justice in Europe to develop RJ. In December 2021, the Ministries of Justice of the Council of Europe (CoE) Member States unanimously adopted a [Declaration on the Role of Restorative Justice in Criminal Matters](#) (the Venice Declaration). The Venice Declaration fully endorses the CoE Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)8 on restorative justice and calls on the CoE to support its Member States to implement it by underlining the importance and advantages of RJ. The most advanced





international document in the field, the CoE Recommendation on RJ states that **RJ should be a generally available service at all stages of the criminal justice process and for all types of crime** (Rules 18, 19 and 6).

In particular, the Ministries of Justice invite the CoE to encourage and assist its member States to: “*develop national action plans or policies, where necessary, for the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec (2018)8 on restorative justice in criminal matters, by ensuring inter agency co-operation nationwide, **adequate national legislation and funding, while reflecting on the idea that a right to access to appropriate restorative justice services for all the interested parties, if they freely consent, should be a goal of the national authorities***”. It also encourages Member States to actively raise awareness of RJ nationwide and to provide adequate judicial and legal training in this respect.

It also situates the development of RJ within United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16: promoting just, peaceful, and inclusive societies. It does not consider restorative justice only “*as a simple tool in the framework of the traditional approach to criminal justice, but as a broader culture that should permeate the criminal justice system based on the participation of the victim and the offender on a voluntary basis, as well as other affected parties and the wider community in addressing and repairing the harm caused by crime*”.

It affirms “*the positive impact of RJ on reducing recidivism and noting the ample empirical evidence which proves that restorative justice is effective and produces satisfactory results for the parties of the conflicts concerned and, beyond that, for a community as a whole*”.

Research findings

RJ complements the criminal justice system through a process that enables the participation of victims and perpetrators more effectively than traditional approaches. Rigorous research shows that victims and offenders participating in RJ processes have a more satisfactory experience of justice. By giving victims the choice to decide whether to participate in RJ processes, RJ advances procedural justice and empowers victims. Studies consistently state that restorative processes achieve satisfaction among at least 85% of the participating victims, improve closure and healing and reduce the fear of further harm to the victim. Meeting with the offender has been shown to reduce post-traumatic stress symptoms in victims and in general helps victims to move forward. These positive outcomes can be understood – according to research – as contributing to meeting the elementary ‘justice needs’ of victims: acknowledgment, having voice, receiving validation, expressing vindication and experiencing accountability. To learn more about the essential research outcomes based on restorative justice studies we refer to the EFRJ paper ***Effectiveness of restorative justice practices. An overview of empirical research on restorative justice practices in Europe*** (2017):





<https://www.euforumrj.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/a.2.7.-effectiveness-of-restorative-justice-practices-2017-efrj.pdf>

RJ and victims' needs

Victims' needs and interests are taken into consideration throughout the whole process. RJ is more successful in increasing offender compliance with restitution when compared to more traditional criminal justice processes and court ordered material compensation. Among the five broad categories of victims' needs recognised by the European Commission,⁵ RJ is acknowledged as a form of compensation/restoration. Indeed, agreements concluded in the RJ process comprise often monetary, material or other form of compensation of victims by the perpetrators. These agreements are fulfilled by offenders in a higher percentage than court ordered compensation. As explained above, however, research shows that RJ goes much beyond financial compensation, addressing all five categories of victims' needs: respectful treatment and recognition as victims; protection from retaliation and further harm; support of longer-term psychological benefits; access to justice and participation; and (as already mentioned) compensation and restoration.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROVISIONS IN A REVISED VICTIMS' RIGHTS DIRECTIVE – A PROPOSAL

To ensure that the benefits of RJ and safeguards for victims are realised, an **effective and equal access to RJ services should be guaranteed for all victims of crime** who freely want to access RJ. This may take the form of establishing the right of access to RJ for victims of crime in the VRD (*Policy Option 1*) or, following the CoE Recommendation on RJ, integrating a rule in the revised VRD that RJ should be **a generally available service at all stages of the criminal justice process and for all types of crime** (Rule 18, 19 and 6 – *Policy Option 2*).

The main difference between Policy Options 1 and 2 is that the latter would not create a right that is enforceable in the criminal justice process for victims, but still provide the framework (based on existing service providers) to make RJ services generally available for victims, as well as promoting the establishment and enlarging of RJ services in all EU MSs and provide the necessary quality standards within these services.

⁵ Victims' rights in EU": https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/criminal-justice/protecting-victims-rights/victims-rights-eu_en





The definition and the other provisions concerning RJ listed below are mainly inspired by the 2018 CoE Recommendation and the recent (2021) CoE Venice Declaration. Our suggestions build on the current VRD and most of the proposed drafting suggestions are directly taken from the CoE Rec on RJ.

- RECITAL
(revision of *Recital 46 in the current VRD*)

Restorative justice services, including for example those that offer victim-offender mediation, restorative conferencing, family group conferencing and sentencing circles, can be of great benefit to the victim. Such services should have as a primary consideration the interests and needs of the victim, repairing the harm done to the victim and avoiding further harm, including by ensuring that the victim's voice is heard, that the process is delivered in a balanced manner, and that the decision to participate in or agree to outcomes in restorative justice is based on free and informed consent. This requires that victims be given both the information and the opportunity (through systematic referral and the option of self-referral) to determine whether restorative justice is right for them.

RJ services must be governed by recognised, evidence-based standards of practice and training to ensure the protection of victims, including vulnerable victims and victims of serious offences. Standards aim to ensure that services address and repair harm effectively and prevent secondary and repeat victimisation, intimidation and retaliation. Restorative justice should be confidential, unless agreed otherwise by the parties, or required by national law due to an overriding public interest. Factors such as threats made or any forms of violence committed during the process may require disclosure in the public interest.

- DEFINITION
(revision of *Article 2 in the current VRD*)

1. For the purposes of this Directive, the following definitions shall apply:

(d) 'restorative justice' means any process which enables those harmed by crime and those responsible for that harm (hereinafter: the parties), if they freely consent, to participate actively in the resolution of matters arising from the criminal offence through the help of a trained and impartial third party (hereinafter: the facilitator).

Restorative justice often takes the form of a dialogue (whether direct or indirect) between the victim and the offender, and can also involve, where appropriate, other persons directly or indirectly affected by a crime. This may include supporters of victims and offenders, relevant professionals and members or representatives of affected communities.





(e) 'restorative justice principles' means the principles which underpin the delivery of restorative justice services, namely: stakeholder participation; voluntariness; deliberative, respectful dialogue; equal concern for the needs and interests of the parties; procedural fairness; collective, consensus based agreement; a focus on repairing harm through reparation, reintegration and achieving mutual understanding; and avoiding domination.

These principles may be used as a framework with which to underpin broader reforms to criminal justice.

- RIGHT TO RECEIVE INFORMATION FROM THE FIRST CONTACT WITH A COMPETENT AUTHORITY
(revision of Article 4 of the current VRD)

1. Member States shall ensure that victims are offered the following information, without unnecessary delay, from their first contact with a competent authority in order to enable them to access the rights set out in this Directive:

(j) their right to access restorative justice services in all cases where an offender is known, and at any time following the offence, and the manners in which they can access those services (*Policy Option 1*) OR

(j) information on the available restorative justice services that can be contacted by the victim at any time following the offence, and the manners in which they can access those services (*Policy Option 2*).

Member States shall set up a coordinated provision of information through state and non-state bodies (including victim support services and restorative justice services) that come into contact with victims to ensure consistent, systematic provision of information. Information should be provided effectively, in several formats (including verbally by trained restorative justice professionals) and at several times.

- (RIGHT TO according to Policy option 1) ACCESS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE SERVICES THAT ADHERE TO STANDARDS (*The title and contents of this Article may depend on whether Policy Option 1 or 2 is adopted*)
(revision of Article 12 of the current VRD)

1. Restorative justice should be a generally available service at all stages of the criminal justice process. The type, seriousness or geographical location of the offence should not, in themselves, and in the absence of other considerations, preclude victims from accessing restorative justice services.





2. Restorative justice should be available free of charge, nationwide and at all stages of the criminal justice process.

3. Member States shall take measures to ensure that restorative justice services are governed by standards which are acknowledged by the competent authorities. Standards of competence and ethical rules are necessary to prevent secondary and repeat victimisation, intimidation and retaliation. Such measures shall ensure that victims who choose to participate in restorative justice processes have access to safe and competent restorative justice services, subject to at least the following conditions:

(a) restorative justice shall only take place with the free and informed consent of all parties, which may be withdrawn at any time. No person should be induced by unfair means to participate in restorative justice. Restorative justice shall not proceed with those who are not capable, for any reason, of understanding the meaning of the process;

(b) before agreeing to participate in the restorative justice process, the parties are provided with full and unbiased information about that process and the potential outcomes, as well as information about the procedures for supervising the implementation of any agreement and, if relevant, the possible implications for ongoing legal proceedings;

(c) the basic facts of a case should normally be acknowledged by the parties as a basis for starting restorative justice. Participation in restorative justice should not be used as evidence of admission of guilt in subsequent legal proceedings;

(d) restorative justice provides a neutral space where all parties are encouraged and supported to express their needs and to have these satisfied as far as possible. As such, restorative justice services are used only when in the interest of the parties, with due consideration given to victims' needs and interests, safety considerations, and the need for protections and standards;

(e) any agreement is arrived at voluntarily and may be taken into account in any further legal proceedings;

(f) agreements should only contain fair, achievable and proportionate actions to which all parties provide free and informed consent;

(g) agreements do not have to include tangible outcomes, as the parties are free to agree that the dialogue sufficiently satisfied their needs and interests;

(h) discussions in restorative justice processes that are not conducted in public are confidential and are not subsequently disclosed, except with the agreement of the parties or as required by national law due to an overriding public interest.

4. Member States shall facilitate the systematic referral of cases to restorative justice services by establishing clear referral pathways at each stage of the criminal justice process, and by





enabling victims to self-refer to restorative justice, including in the absence of a prosecution and at any time following the offence.

5. Justice ministries, criminal justice agencies and other judicial authorities should collaborate to ensure that restorative justice is fully accessible by creating the conditions, procedures and infrastructure necessary to refer cases to restorative justice services. This requires clear referral pathways, mechanisms for sharing information (such as victim contact details and risk information), and a common understanding of the meaning and purpose of restorative justice.

6. In cases which are not referred to restorative justice, the reasons for doing so should be recorded and, if sought, communicated to the victim. *(This provision is relevant only in case of Policy Option 1)*

7. In cases where, for any reason, dialogue between victims and offenders is not possible, judicial authorities, criminal justice agencies, victim support services and restorative justice services may enable, provide or refer victims to other services or practices aimed at reparation or recovery that are delivered in accordance with restorative justice principles.

- TRAINING

(revision of Article 25 of the current VRD)

4. Through their public services or by funding victim support organisations and restorative justice services, Member States shall encourage initiatives enabling those providing victim support and restorative justice services to receive adequate training to a level appropriate to their contact with victims and observe professional standards to ensure such services are provided in an impartial, respectful and professional manner.

5. Whereas a victim may benefit from referral to restorative justice services at every stage of the criminal justice process, Member States shall ensure that all competent authorities are trained to explain restorative justice accurately and impartially, and to make referrals to restorative justice services. This training should be provided in relevant training institutes and programmes, such as in police and judicial training, and include regular, ongoing training opportunities for professionals.

6. Training of restorative justice facilitators should be governed by recognised standards as a core safeguard for the parties. Facilitators should be experienced and receive advanced and specialist training before delivering restorative justice in sensitive, complex or serious cases, or cases involving vulnerable victims.





- SYSTEMIC COOPERATION AND COORDINATION OF SERVICES
(revision of Article 26 of the current VRD)

1. Member States shall facilitate systemic cooperation between (state and non-state) actors likely to come into contact with victims, including restorative justice services, to improve the access of victims to the rights set out in this Directive and under national law. Such cooperation shall be aimed at least at:

(a) the exchange of best practices;

(b) consultation in individual cases; and

(c) assistance to European networks working on matters directly relevant to victims' rights.

2. There should be regular consultation between judicial authorities, criminal justice and restorative justice agencies, legal professionals, and groups acting on behalf of victims, offenders and communities, in order to enable the development of a common understanding of the meaning and purpose of restorative justice.

3. Member States shall take appropriate action, including through the internet, aimed at raising awareness of the rights set out in this Directive, reducing the risk of victimisation, and minimising the negative impact of crime and the risks of secondary and repeat victimisation, of intimidation and of retaliation, in particular by targeting groups at risk such as children, victims of gender-based violence and violence in close relationships. Such action may include information and awareness raising campaigns and research and education programmes, where appropriate in cooperation with relevant civil society organisations and other stakeholders.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Standards in delivering restorative justice as safeguard for victims

Values and standards are essential for high-quality RJ processes. The development and dissemination of standards to ensure high quality services is at the core of the EFRJ work. The "Manual on Restorative Justice Values and Standards for Practice" is the outcome of an extensive work led by the EFRJ's Values and Standards Committee ([here](#) is the link to the Manual). The EFRJ and its Committee also developed Restorative Justice Quality Review Toolkits. In particular, the Self-Assessment for Organisations implementing restorative justice within the criminal justice system ([here](#)); the Self-Assessment for Practitioners ([here](#)); the Feedback questions for participants of restorative processes ([here](#)).





Moreover, it is important to stress that trained and skilled restorative facilitators are best placed to work with the individuals involved and manage the risks. As stressed by the CoE Recommendation on RJ, facilitators should receive initial training before delivering restorative justice, as well as ongoing, in-service training (Rule 42). Facilitators should, moreover, be experienced and receive advanced training before delivering restorative justice in sensitive, complex or serious cases (Rule 43). The CoE Recommendation on RJ makes several other provisions for staff training (Rules 42-45 and 57) and safe and effective facilitation processes (throughout Parts III-VI).

- Access to RJ services for all victims of a crime, including domestic violence and sexual violence cases

The EFRJ envisages that restorative justice becomes available and accessible for all victims that freely want to access RJ. Access to RJ should not depend on offender or offence characteristics but on the needs of the victim. In certain countries, there are still limitations in access to RJ in case of violence against women and domestic violence (VAW).

As research and standards of best practice continue to improve, the benefits that a restorative process can have for victims of domestic or sexual violence are becoming increasingly recognised and appreciated. Survivors of sexual and domestic abuse are so often silenced, doubted and re-traumatised. RJ can make them feel empowered, listened to and able to move forward. Every victim should be able to speak to a restorative provider if they want to.⁶

Despite the benefits, RJ services must be prepared to understand and address the risks involved in cases of VAW. These cases should follow high standards that guarantee safeguards for victims as well as trained restorative facilitators (see above). The [UN Second Edition of the Handbook on Restorative Justice Programmes](#) (2020) cites a satisfaction survey that reports that 83 percent of victims of sexual violence who had participated in a restorative justice process were satisfied with the overall process. Very significantly the UN Handbook recognises the risk of secondary victimisation and that the “*vulnerability of victims of sexual violence raises concerns about if, when and how to approach the topic of restorative justice with them*” but that “*failing to discuss the possibility of restorative justice with the victims may deprive them of an opportunity to heal*”.

⁶ The organisation *Why Me?* have published in October 2021 a new paper – [Using restorative approaches for domestic and sexual abuse: A personal choice](#). The paper builds on academic research, the testimony of *Why Me? Ambassadors* (i.e. survivors of domestic and sexual abuse), and existing good practice to unpick the benefits, concerns and best practice for using restorative approaches in cases of domestic and sexual abuse.





The EFRJ recently (May 2022) submitted to the EC its position concerning the proposed Directive on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. We present concrete recommendations on how RJ could be included in the proposed directive on VAW. It also presents key aspects concerning the use of RJ in particularly sensitive cases such as violence against women and domestic violence. The position offers an overview of recent research findings related to victims and RJ (in particular victims of VAW), to RJ and desistance from crime, and to the main EU and international documents concerning RJ, victims' rights and VAW. [Here](#), to access this document.

- Institutional frame of RJ services (i.e. how should RJ services be established)

Some victim support organisations express concerns about the neutrality and appropriateness for victims of RJ services that are provided by criminal justice agencies (e.g. probation services) primarily working with offenders. Institutional frameworks should specify the necessary neutrality of the service and its facilitators; standards of practice should contain additional safeguards for victims and training of facilitators should contain modules on how to work with victims and on the difference between the probation and facilitator roles.

Ideally, RJ services should be set up as an independent service from (other) criminal justice agencies, with public funding. Service providers could be state or community organisations. Trust in the RJ service by the referring bodies and due information sharing between these services should be enabled. Services should be accessible in a geographically balanced way. Quality of the services should be supervised by public bodies.

- Funding of RJ services

Research shows that RJ reduces the costs of the criminal justice process and of reconviction. It also saves money on (mental) health care. Still, in many Member States these savings are not reallocated to finance restorative justice services and/or victim support. Investing in high quality and accessible restorative justice services would save money in the long term for the whole society and could create resources for more efficient support for victims of crime.

- Legal remedies for victims

Legal remedies for victims regarding not receiving information, the non-referral of the case to restorative justice against their wish (in case a right of access is established) and for their potential negative experience (e.g. right to a fair, neutral process adhering to safeguards) in the restorative justice process should be introduced in the criminal justice process.





CONCLUDING REMARKS

The VRD was a crucial step towards the development of RJ in the EU and it has certainly provided RJ with a more solid position and a clear victim orientation in Europe. However, given that the VRD does not create any obligation for Member States either to create RJ services where these are lacking, nor to making existing services generally available for victims, and given that it does not establish a right of access to RJ for victims, we would support that the revision of the VRD takes into account our proposal and moves forward victims' rights by strengthening their access to RJ.

Further initiatives promoted by the EU, including a revised VRD, are needed to increase the accessibility and availability of RJ services and to ensure a balanced approach between the parties. As stated by the Council of Europe Recommendation on RJ (Rule 15), RJ should not be designed or delivered to promote the interests of either the victim or offender ahead of the other. Rather, it provides a neutral space where all parties are encouraged and supported to express their needs and to have these satisfied as far as possible.

RJ does not only serve the needs of individual victims and offenders and their direct environment. It also represents a social and political option on how we wish to develop and organise our societies: not from a predominantly individualistic, consumer or complainer perspective, but from the recognition that all involved in or affected by crime are worth of human dignity and equality, and therefore should be enabled to participate and to take up a role as *citizen*. RJ, in this sense, acts against polarising tendencies in society and supports the formation of social cohesion and democratic values.

This need for a balanced and broad, social approach is one of the reasons why the EFRJ will continue to advocate for an EU binding act on RJ (such as a standalone Directive) to provide a systematic and comprehensive right to access RJ services for all victims and offenders, and others affected by or involved in harmful events. Beyond the revision of the VRD and the actual provisions on RJ in the VRD, the EFRJ calls on the EC:

- to consider a comprehensive EU binding act (such as a Directive) on RJ;
- to include RJ in other relevant EU policies and legislation on, but also beyond, victims' rights (e.g. rights of offenders to receive information, child-friendly justice, combatting hate crime, cybercrime, violent extremism, sexual and gender-based violence, environmental crime etc.);
- to include RJ in the EU awareness campaigns on victims' rights and provide (financial) support to RJ services as foreseen by the EU Strategy on Victims' Rights.

The EFRJ is ready to support the EC in the revision of the RJ related provisions of the VRD and to collaborate to foster victims' rights in the EU.

