



VICTIM SUPPORT EUROPE

35

years of
Victim Support
in Europe

Transforming Lives Today,
Inspiring a Brighter Tomorrow

2025 VSE Annual Conference
LISBON 22 - 23 MAY

ANNUAL CONFERENCE REPORT



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HOSTED BY:



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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Summary of the Event.....	5
Plenary Sessions	5
Day 1: Milestones in Victim Support: Lessons from the Past, Strategies for the Future	5
Day 2: Practical Solutions for Present and Future Victim Support.....	8
Side Events	15
Side Events Programme	15
Blitz Talks	17
Blitz Talk Programme	17
Social Event	19
Conference Dinner at Alcântara Café.....	19
Conference Evaluation	20
Participants' feedback.....	23
Sponsors.....	24
Issured Ltd.....	24
Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.....	25
Turismo de Lisboa	25
Sheraton Lisboa Hotel Spa.....	25
Lisbon Marriott Hotel.....	26
International Conference Alerts.....	26
NECX	26
Buyhearts	27

Introduction

[Victims Support Europe \(VSE\)](#)'s 2025 annual conference took place on 22nd & 23rd May in Lisbon, Portugal. The hybrid conference, "[35 Years of Victim Support in Europe – Transforming Lives Today, Inspiring a Brighter Tomorrow](#)" took place in the [Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation](#), and digitally.

[Victim Support Europe](#), alongside the [Portuguese Association for Victim Support \(APAV\)](#) celebrated their 35th anniversary. This event provided not only a place for celebration but also of reflection to think of the growth and progresses achieved through out more than three decades in victim support. Our programme aligns with the current political climate in post-election Europe and is guided by the [Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission](#), with a particular focus on youth.

The conference leverages the momentum of 2025, a year that holds significant historical importance for victims' rights within the European Union (EU). Key milestones include:

- 40th Anniversary of the Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power (adopted on 29th November 1985 by the General Assembly), which established the foundational principles for the protection and support of victims.
- 25th Anniversary of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, reaffirming the EU's commitment to fundamental freedoms.
- 5th Anniversary of the EU's First Strategy on Victims' Rights (2020-2025), marking a pivotal moment for assessing progress and refining policy implementation.
- Reform of the Victims' Rights Directive, highlighting ongoing legislative efforts to ensure comprehensive protection for victims across the EU.

239 people attended the conference, accompanied by 18 online participants. The event featured over 25 speakers from various fields, addressing themes centred around the conference topic.

Day one was dedicated to discussing the milestones in Victim Support, what we can learn from the past and how to move forward towards the future. Day two was centred around practical solutions for present and future victim support.



Summary of the Event

The following section provides an overview of the plenary sessions, workshops and social events that were held during the conference.

Plenary Sessions

Day 1: Milestones in Victim Support: Lessons from the Past, Strategies for the Future

Welcome session

João Lázaro (President of the [Portuguese Association for Victim Support, APAV](#)) opened the conference by stating that the double anniversary of both [VSE](#) and [APAV](#), is a testament of commitment and shared values. This long term alliance has faced resistance, lack of political will, legal gaps and institutional silence. Even though the EU legal framework has been a key driver for change, few legal norm is effectively drawn into reality. **Lázaro** explains that supporting victims is about ensuring that their rights are respected at every stage of the journey. All systems should adopt a victim-centred approach focused on cooperation with other institutions. His opening speech ended by recognising the achievements that were made on these past 35 years while also recognising how much remains to be done and the risks at hand.

Rosa Jansen (President of [Victim Support Europe](#)) then took the stage to celebrate the achievements of victim support services these past years and to renew the commitment to victims' rights. However, she stated, victim support still has a long way to go, as victims still face systemic obstacles, barriers to justice, and lack of access to support. Justice is still perpetrator oriented. One of the biggest problems victim support services face are inconsistent implementation and coordination. **Jansen** concluded her speech by stating that victims' rights should not be an afterthought but a part of our systems fabric, and that we should not take anything for granted but work in unison to ensure every victim is treated with dignity and can access justice.

The next speaker was **Katarzyna Janicka-Pawlowska** (Coordinator for [Victims' Rights, European Commission](#)), who detailed the advancements on victims' rights in the European Union but explained how the concept of victims' rights is relatively new and that we should continue raising awareness. The two priorities of the EU now are revising the Victim Rights Directive and start working on the next EU strategy. She concluded that the fundamental work that needs to be done is upholding democracies and building a just world.



Voices in Defence of Victims' Rights

Helgard van Hüllen (former Vice President of [Victim Support Europe](#) and Chair of [Landesbüro Bayern-Süd of Weisser Ring](#)) proceeded to explain that criminal law started focusing on victims very recently. Before the focus was always on the crime or perpetrator. He emphasised that legislation is different from implementation, and that this can be challenging in different countries. Other common obstacles include lack of funding and online crimes.

Before the next presentation, a video testimony from a victim of a door-to-door scam was shown.

Jan J. M. van Dijk (Professor Emeritus in Victimology, [Tilburg University](#)) presented the findings of the first European conference of victim support network in the Netherlands, "Guidelines of Victim Support in Europe". The main consensus was that victim support should offer crisis intervention, practical advice, legal assistance and counselling.

A second video testimony was shown of a victim of a hate crime that led to a moment of reflection between the attendees.

The final video testimony of this part of the conference was about Teddy, a police dog that works supporting victims, making them feel safe and reassured.

Opening Speech: "Celebrating 35 Years of Universality, Indivisibility and Transformation of Victims' Rights"

The official opening speech of the conference was given by **Levent Altan** (Executive Director, [Victim Support Europe, VSE](#)). After going through some of the biggest milestones in victims' rights from the past 25 years, **Altan** explained how still there are multiple challenges that need to be faced. Victim support standards vary drastically among EU member states, depending on their levels of implementation, professional trainings and systemic shortcomings. Additionally, the shifting political context is threatening the implementation of these rights, a clear example was the cutting of EU funds.

Altan stated that the way to get over these hurdles is by shifting the narrative to the perspective of the victims. There needs to be a systemic victim centred approach where they are empowered and given the space to speak out in a system that has a victim centred response to crime.

Keynote Speaker: “From the Margins to the Mainstream: Shaping the Future of Victim Support for a Safer, More Inclusive Society”

Martyn Herward (Director of Business Services & Deputy Chief Executive, [Victim Support England and Wales](#)) was the keynote speaker for the first day the conference. He reflected on past times, current challenges and the future to come. He went through the history of victim support that started with the first prison reform led by Margery Fry in 1921 in the United Kingdom. Victimology, as a field of study, arose in Europe after World War II, particularly to understand the criminal-victim relationship. Three decades later, in 1970’s USA, published studies about the impact of different crimes on victims influences the development of strategies to help victims cope. At the same time, victim support services started to develop in Europe. The first one being Victim Support England in 1974. By the 1990’s 12 countries in the EU had their own victim support services and Victim Support Europe was founded.

Nowadays the key for these rights to be implemented are organisation, planning and funding models that provide these services. A mixture of short-term and long-term projects with sustainable initiatives that encourage innovation, collaboration and networking. The objective is that every victim should be able to receive fully funded, professional and high-quality support provided by services that collaborate directly with the government.

Panel Session 1: “Do International Instruments Work for Victims?”

The panel session of the day was made up by **Katarzyna Janicka-Pawlowska** (Coordinator for [Victim’s Rights, European Commission](#)), who also moderated the discussion, **Alice Hamilton** (Project Manager at the Justice, Digital and Migration Unit, [European Agency for Fundamental Rights, FRA](#)), **Simona Florescu** (Litigation Manager, [Validity Foundation](#)), and **Sónia Moreira Reis** (invited professor at the [Institute for Social and Political Sciences, from the University of Lisbon](#))

International instruments provide a strong foundation for a successful rights landscape in the EU, the panellists argue. The UN declaration sets the importance of standards and the Council of Europe lead the way with case law, recognising and putting into effect the rights of victims. Other international instruments include UN conventions, EU directives, among others.

The panellists explain that the [Council of Europe](#) is essential for victims' rights as it pushes the boundaries of national law through international instruments and it brings cases to the [ECHR](#) when national courts don't comply with international standards. The EU Convention of Human Rights is fundamental in this process as it further pushes the boundaries of national law through international instruments. Furthermore, The European Court of Justice and litigation are key at exposing failures of implementation.

The most promising pathways for a comprehensive rights landscape is to focus on a joint approach, improving EU legislations to achieve more impact at a national level, and better coordination among actors – from EU institutions, NGO's, private companies to governments. All of this while keeping the victims' voices at the core of this issue. Additionally, the panellists explained that the cost by year on victimisation is very high but that the exact number is unclear. This data would be key to reorganise the funding and create a better rights landscape on a national level.

The speakers finalised the first panel of the conference by explaining that there needs to be a shift in perspective in order to change societies to become more resilient, where victims can speak freely and not be ashamed of what they have been through. Last but not least, there should be a positive obligation of the states so all victims have the right to report the crime, where there is effective investigations and access to justice.

[Day 2: Practical Solutions for Present and Future Victim Support](#)

Opening Session: "Strengthening Victim Support & Empowering Youth for Change"

The second and final day of the conference commenced with a session about empowering the youth. **Rosa Jansen** (President, [Victim Support Europe](#)) remarked that in present days' perpetrators are often found online behind the screen and they target two groups of people specifically: the youth and the elderly. This new paradigm of crime means that there needs to be a support system for victims that are not aware they are being victimised. To successfully help these people, there should be a system with inter-agency and cross-border frameworks where victim support services can reach out to the victims. For this to succeed, **Jansen** states, inclusivity is key. These services should be trauma-informed, disability sensitive and intercultural in order for them to be effective.

The elderly are particularly vulnerable because of isolation, lack of technological knowledge and dependency to others. While the youth are vulnerable due to their young age and naivety. To help these victims we need to build resilience, create school programmes, further implement victim support services, inform people, implement court-based support and establish restorative justice programmes.

Eva Fechner (Legal Advisor, [Slachtofferhulp Nederland](#)) continued the session focusing on youth-centred support systems. The youth are often victimised but remain barely visible to authorities and end up finding resources online instead. It's estimated that only 5-7% of young victims go to the police due to embarrassment, shame or lack of faith in the justice system. Still, these victims want help but have different needs and wants. In the Netherlands, **Fechner** remarked, the victim support services started involving itself more with the youth. They used new marketing tactics, like working with influencers to become more visible and implemented the use of online platforms the youth use. The impact has been overwhelmingly positive with more than 100.000 young people visiting the platform, 1 million + views and 653+ youths joined peer support groups.

Keynote Speaker: "How Can We Empower Youth as Agents of Change? A Cybercrime Example in Action"

The second keynote speaker of the conference was **Pedro Verdelho** (Coordinator of the Cybercrime Office within the Prosecutor General's Office) he said that we need to empower the youth as agents of change. We currently live in a world that is changing, where fake news and misinformation abound and where the internet ignores and manipulates the rules of society, **Verdelho** declared. Furthermore, most children don't report crime, or even bullying. There needs to be a guide for prosecution services to use in schools to aim to prevent victimisation and to encourage reporting crimes and wrongdoings. The youth needs to be aware of their rights: the right to privacy, to be respected, to not be harassed, to be safe and to do any literary and artistic work.

Round Table: "Mainstreaming Victim Issues in IT for Inclusive Solutions"

The first round table of the day discussed the challenges and advantages modern technology brings. It was composed of **Maja Štahan** (Coordinator National Call Centre for Victims of Crime, [Victim and Witness Support Service Croatia](#)), **Jed Stone** (Chief Revenue Officer, [Issured Ltd.](#)) and **Rannveig Sigurvinsdóttir** (Associate professor, Department of Psychology, [Reykjavik University](#)) It was moderated by **Aleksandra Ivankovic** (Deputy Director, Victim) The speakers explained that Artificial

Intelligence (AI) can be used to improve victim support services by increasing trust, inclusiveness and comfort so people feel that they can talk in their own terms in a safe and confidential space.

Victims with disabilities can greatly benefit from the use of AI to comfortably and accessibly use websites and other technologies. In addition, virtual reality has been used to help survivor train for court and avoid emotions like fear and anxiety that affect cognitive processes during the actual trial. This simulation allows them to be more prepared and in control of their emotions, leading to better testimonies.

Nevertheless, technology can also be weaponised. Radicalisation, deep fakes, disinformation and more can pose threatening challenges. This is why block chains and AI and deep fake detection software's are incredibly important and should be easily available.

The round table members concluded that technology can be used in a very positive way but that we should be mindful and careful when using it and implementing it. Developers should think of victim-centred programmes that provide all the positives of technology while keeping the threats at bay. At the same time society should push for a world where victims, particularly young people, feel free to speak out if they are victims of online crimes or harassment.

Round Table: “Inclusive Solutions for Crime Victims – Elderly Victims as a Key Example”

The second roundtable of the day was moderated by **João Lázaro** (President, [Portuguese Association for Victim Support, APAV](#)) and was led by **Marta Mendes** (Manager of Braga Victim Support Office & APAV MAIS – Support to Older People Victim of Crime and Violence, [Portuguese Association for Victim Support, APAV](#)), **Demos Antoniou** (President of [Cyprus Third Age Observatory](#)) and **Jérôme Moreau** (President of [France Victimes 58 ANDAVI](#)) The presentation dived into the importance of inclusivity. The speakers discussed that there needs to be more information about how to help people from different walks of life, illnesses, abilities, and more. As a key example they used the elderly, whose victimisation has been on the rise the past years. Victim services need to identify their needs and dissociate them from societies negative ideas of aging and seeing elders as social burdens. There needs to be an increase in intervention and awareness of this phenomenon.

Additionally, abuse against the elderly usually goes unnoticed or is underreported. Trauma, systemic obstacles, stigma and social isolation are a big reason for this. Elders fear being treated unfairly or being put in nursing homes if they reveal what they have experienced.

The speakers claimed that one of the most significant challenges when trying to face these types of crime are lack of awareness and insufficient knowledge about elder abuse, and how this can affect their physical and mental health.

A country that decided to take a stance on this issue is France. They created an awareness campaign with the strategy to shame the perpetrators, and making society understand the vulnerability of the elders and the reality that anyone can be a victim of crime and injustice. They created a national helpline; encouraged reporting; established court-based support with lawyers, social workers and psychologists; restorative justice for the elderly; access to information, and more.

Parallel Sessions: “Leveraging Cooperation and Coordination for Effective Victim Support”

Parallel Session #1: Transforming Victim Support through International Cooperation

Levent Altan (Executive director of [Victim Support Europe, VSE](#)) moderated the first parallel session about international cooperation and coordination for effective victim support.

Sue O’Sullivan (Chair, International Network Supporting Victims of Terrorism and Mass Violence, INVICTM) commenced the session by explaining the work that INVICTM does. It is a network dedicated to bring together trusted experts dedicated to improving support for victims of terrorism and mass violence. The strength of INVICTM lies in the ability to share lessons learned, leverage the knowledge and expertise of its members and their networks, to influence change and turn research into action within our own countries and globally. The group of over 30 international members includes NGOs, law enforcement agencies, civil society members and other experts that provide information based upon their background, country and professional perspective.

Jeahyen Soung (Director General of [Human Rights Bureau, Ministry of Justice, South Korea](#)) followed **O’Sullivan** by presenting the paradigm of South Korea when it comes to victims’ rights. They are currently working to improve their national framework, and their **Human Rights Bureau** is on a mission to champion human rights of all the individuals of the country. Their goal is to create a one-stop solution centre that is able to provide customised and tailored services for victims of different crimes.

He finished his presentation by expressing the need for international collaboration, developing technology that works to support victims and capacity victim training through international exchange. Victim support is not an option, it is an obligation **Jeahyen** concluded.

The third and final speaker of this session was **Kulbir Kaur** (Senior Investigating Officer and Family Liaison Coordinator, [Counter Terrorism Policing UK, CTP](#)). The CTP, she said, is a network that works to keep people safe from terrorism. They have used international collaboration to support victims in numerous cases, like with referral mechanisms and working with UNICEF to deliver support to refugees. The main challenges they face however, are the lack of a standardised definition of crime, varied procedures, criminalisation of victims – and the importance of risk assessments -, and identifications. **Kaur** suggested that a stronger policy and legal framework should be implemented. As well as victim-centred legal procedures, trainings and a reduction of language barriers.

[Parallel Session #2: “How national frameworks can be effectively implemented into practical, on-the-ground practices? From Legislation to Implementation.”](#)

The next session, which discussed the implementation of national frameworks, was moderated by **Antonio De Martin** (Senior Project Manager of [Victim Support Europe, VSE](#))

Susana Videira (Director-general for the Justice Policy, Ministry of Justice), represented by **Monica Gomez**, affirmed that the main challenges victims’ rights face is conciliating legislation with practice. In an ideal system the directive is directly transposed into the framework, but this almost never occurs in practice. There has to be a multidisciplinary approach and a collaboration with civil society. In Portugal, they have created victim support cabinets that work close to the public prosecution with the participation of NGO’s. Their aim is to reduce secondary victimisation, to provide support and seek justice.

Brian Farrugia (Chief Executive Officer of [Victim Support Agency](#)) stated that national frameworks must appeal to all stakeholder in a country and that they must bear key principles: consistency, relevance to NGOs and governmental organisations, coordinated approach, credibility and clarity. For this, there needs to be a change of mentality so people can work together and put the victim at the centre of attention. In Malta, **Farrugia** names as an example, victims are provided with free legal guidance, emotional support, help during investigations and provide court-based support to make the victim feel more at ease.

Markéta Vitoušová (Branch Manager of [Bílý kruh bezpečí](#)) concluded this session by explaining that victim impact statements are crucial and support should be offered proactively. There needs to be training for professionals and a raised awareness about people rights, the needs of victims and the reasons why there is underreporting.

Parallel Sessions: “Building a Safer Future: Inclusive Solutions for Crime Victims and the Role of AI in Strengthening Victim Support and Prevention”

Parallel Sessions #1: “Inclusive Solutions for Crime Victims: Protecting Children from Sexual Crimes”

The first of these two parallel sessions dealt with support for child victims of sexual crimes. It was moderated by **Carla Ferreira** (Manager of [APAV CARE](#) – Support to Children and Youngster Victims of Sexual Violence, [Portuguese Association for Victim Support, APAV](#))

Cristina Soeiro (Vice president of the [Portuguese Association for Victim Support, APAV](#)) opened the discussion by explaining that child sexual abuse is a delicate and complex topic, so it is important for professionals to have ongoing training. An inclusive approach is key, so the family of the child has to be included. Moreover, sexual education and identifying risk factors are incredibly important. Collaboration, good practices and resources are as well, as these will allow stakeholders to be better informed. Finally, it is central that children are interviewed and assessed so that professionals can learn more about their needs and developments to be able to help them efficiently and successfully.

Stavroula Spiropoulou (Psychologist, Helplines Supervisor, and [Coordinator of the National Centre for Abuse and Exploitation, Smile of the Child](#)) followed up by pointing out four key elements: sensitivity, awareness (in children), training professionals and accessibility to information and support services. Not only should the crime be prevented, but families should also be supported as some parents have trauma themselves or are not aware of the risk their child is facing. To provide these services there needs to be a national plan for victims of child sexual assault, while it is estimated that right now only 50% of these plans are being implemented as they should. Helplines should also be easily available to get help whenever and wherever it is needed.

Parallel Sessions #2: “How AI and Tech Can Strengthen Victim Support and Crime Prevention for a Safer Future?”

The second and last parallel session of the conference was moderated by **Rosa Saavedra** (Technical Advisor to the Board, [Portuguese Association for Victim Support, APAV](#))

The first speaker was **Arastalis Choudhury** (Founder of [NECX](#)) who, after seeing the lack of knowledge people had about the criminal justice system, support services and other important tools, created [NECX](#). This is the first digital network that connects victim support providers and survivors, no matter the act or crime. He wanted to create a simple and accessible system to provide support for people in whatever stage of victimisation: pre-victimisation, victimisation and post-victimisation. Whatever the victim need, either it being early intervention, access to information or support, [NECX](#) could provide all those services. **Choudhury** explained that security is essential, that is why [NECX](#) uses end-to-end encryption and extra safety measures so victims feel comfortable and safe. Additionally, they use AI software's to be able to find grants, generate proposals, track performance data, PMT data reporting and analyse bodycam footage for investigations.

The next speaker, **Elie Kagan** (Head of Crisis Management, [SACC by EJC](#)), also highlighted the importance of effective and varied tools. SACC, through the CERV program, created the programme [SAFE](#) that is designed to increase young people's awareness of potential threats they may face which also works as one stop shop for recorded information about victims. Also, they created the SAFE programme - focused on the youth - where they created brochures, trainings and online games about different topics with the sensitivity of children to prevent victimisation. On top of that, they also created crisis management drills, using AI videos for better presentation and immersion on these different scenarios.

Zoé Colpaert (Regional Program Manager Europe, [The International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, ICMEC](#)) concluded this panel by presenting the work [ICMEC](#) does. They work to identify the gaps, in both a national and international capacity, in prevention and care for victims, to advance child protection and safeguard vulnerable children. **Colpaert** stated that AI has created a fertile landscape for child abuse exploitation. There is cyber bullying and harassment, "nudeyfing" software's, programmes for sexual role play with bots that use a child's voice, etc. There has been a 1325% increase in cyber-tip line reports about child sexual abuse material involving generative AI. The issue with this, she continued, is that there is little coherence on laws and punishment, and with the exponential advancement of this technology, it is hard to differentiate generated and real images. However, AI can also be used for prevention. Programmes like fake job offers detectors, grooming scanner tools, anti-grooming mobile apps, among others, help to track down these perpetrators. AI

also facilitates investigations providing easier identification, age and gender estimators. Finally, it can be a support tool for professionals providing e-learning services and capacity building.

Keynote Speaker: Inspiring a Brighter Tomorrow

The final keynote speaker was **Antony Pemberton** (Professor at the [Leuven Institute of Criminology](#) and Senior Researcher at the [Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement, NSCR](#)). He asserted that victimisation and the experience of victims is a key touchstone in assessing justice in our societies. Pemberton explained that victims may experience severe isolation that leads them to cling to the past, before they became victimized. However, this impossible wish makes them to not face the future with a sense of hope and possibility of things getting better. Communion, the speaker continued, is what eliminates those feelings of loneliness and clinging to the past creating unity and a new optimism for the future. The goal of criminal justice should not be retribution, but instead it should work as an acknowledgement of the wrongdoings victims have suffered to open new ways into the future.

Closing Session

Amadeu Francisco Ribeiro Guerra (Attorney General of the Republic) closed the conference by thanking [Victim Support Europe](#) and **Rosa Jansen** and remarked the importance of supporting all victims, no matter the crime or the offence.

Side Events

Side Events Programme

WORKSHOP A | Mapping Victims' Rights: A Transformative Tool for Improved Access and Support, Including Trauma-Informed Support

Nela Kalpic presented the Victim Rights Mapping Exercise, an innovative, collaborative tool that visually and systematically outlines the path victims take to access their rights and services within the justice system. Developed as the first exercise of its kind in partnership with the [Wisconsin Department of Justice](#), this mapping framework identifies gaps, highlights potential barriers, and

enables victim support professionals to streamline processes, ensuring that victims' rights are meaningfully upheld from the moment of reporting through sentencing and beyond.

Kate MacGowan followed up with a session that drew on innovative, multi-disciplinary, and international approaches to understanding and implementing trauma-informed care. By focusing on practical strategies and real-world examples, participants were able to learn how to integrate trauma awareness into their work to better support victims and their unique experiences.

WORKSHOP B | Turning Legislation into Action: implementing the directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence & Suffering for Justice: Sexual Violence Victim-Survivors' Experiences of Going to Court

This workshop, co-led by [Slachtofferhulp Nederland](#) explored the implementation of the [EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence](#), the first comprehensive legal framework of its kind. The Directive calls for improved rights, protection, and support for victims of crime, emphasising cooperation, coordination, and digitalisation across Member States.

Afterwards, [Victim Support England and Wales](#) presented their recent report [Suffering For Justice](#). They presented an overview of the report, findings and recommendations, whilst using the three main sections of the report to encourage participants to reflect on victim-survivors experiences across different jurisdictions.

WORKSHOP C | Addressing Victim Blaming: A Barrier to Effective Victim Support

Drawing on [Victim Support New Zealand's](#) recent research and public awareness campaign, this session highlighted how victim blaming prevents victims – especially those from vulnerable populations like ethnic minorities, LGBTQIA+ communities, and disabled people – from reporting crime and seeking support. Participants learnt actionable strategies to address victim blaming at each stage of the victim's journey – from legislation and the criminal justice system to societal attitudes and internal practices – ultimately strengthening their ability to provide effective, inclusive support.

WORKSHOP D | Hora de SER® Program: Raising Awareness and Educating for Relationships

This workshop aimed to introduce participants to APAV's [Hora de SER® programme](#) (Raising Awareness and Educating for Relationships). This is a prevention programme focused on interpersonal violence aimed for ages between 3- 6 years old (pre-schooler's version) and 6-10 years old (primary school version). The programme can be applied both in scholar and communitarian contexts and it was developed by [APAV](#) with the intention to work on issues such as gender (dis)equality and social roles, to promote respect for others and to teach positive conflict resolution strategies.

WORKSHOP E | Quantifying the Benefits of Victim Support Services

Presented by the [BeneVict Project](#) Consortium, this data-driven workshop explored the key findings from the research conducted through the BeneVict project aimed at quantifying the benefits of victim support services. They focused on exploring the results of the cost-benefit analysis conducted across three EU Member States (SE, NL, PT), highlighting the value of these services, exploring both the economic and social benefits.

Blitz Talks

[Blitz Talk Programme](#)

BLITZ TALK A | Transforming Lives Through Group Work and Peer Support

Led by **Ellen Hall** ([Victim Support England and Wales](#)), this talk delved into how online group work can validate victims' experiences of crime and trauma, helping them move forward and build resilience. This blitz talk highlighted the cost-effectiveness and empowering nature of group work and peer support, showing how it helps participants understand their feelings, learn about trauma responses, and connect with others who share similar experiences.

BLITZ TALK B | Helpers and Professionals: How to Support Victims Through Their Social and Professional Network.

Hetty Burgman and **Franck Wagemakers**, from [Slachtofferhulp Nederland](#) delivered a blitz talk about how Victim Support Netherlands works with 'helpers' and professional networks to develop an online platform that provides the necessary tools to support victims. With these tools, friends, neighbours, relatives, teachers and medical staff, amongst others, know how to recognise signs of possible

victimhood, how to start a conversation with the victim and how to be supportive. Through targeted campaigning, they raise awareness of the role that people and professionals can play.

BLITZ TALK C | Raising Awareness and Addressing the Hidden Reality of Sibling Violence in Flanders: Insights from Helpline 1712 and the Centers for General Social Welfare (CAW)

Kasia Uzieblo ([Helpline 1712](#), Belgium) and **Mieke Van Durme** ([Centre for General Social Welfare, East-Flanders, Belgium, CAW](#)) talked about the importance of helplines when supporting victims. Helpline 1712 is a free, anonymous and professional helpline for anyone with questions about violence, sexual abuse and child abuse in Flanders (Belgium). The helpline is available to victims, bystanders and perpetrators of violence. The helpline is staffed by counsellors from the Centres for General Social Welfare (CAW) and the Child Abuse Trust Centers. Since its founding in 2002, the helpline has seen a very large growth in the number of calls and has become one of the most important low threshold services in Flanders for people confronted with violence. During this blitz talk, they showcased the helpline's campaign on sibling violence, reflected on the calls to the helpline regarding this violence, and explored how the [CAW](#) addresses it.

BLITZ TALK D | The Do's and Don'ts in Situation of Elder Abuse

This Blitz Talk, given by **Lily De Clercq** ([CAW Oost Vlaanderen/ VLOCO](#)) introduced the audience into the severity and scale of elder abuse. She delved into how to support and process these victims as well as what risk assessment tools are the most effective. Finally, she presented [VLOCO](#), a Flemish support line and centre for abuse of older people.

BLITZ TALK E | Make People Whole Again

During this Blitz Talk, **Pol de Groote** ([CAW Antwerpen](#) / Asmodee Shelter for victims of human trafficking) explained the functioning of the shelter house for victims of human trafficking. They provide shelter and support victims in three shelter houses, where they provide tailored support in an appropriate setting. The group is a handy tool to make the inside and outside world safe for them. They help them regain trust in themselves and work on a pre-therapeutical level to help them become active and confident.

BLITZ TALK F | Victim Support Scotland's Emergency Assistance Fun



Kate Wallace ([Victim Support Scotland](#)) talked about the [Scotland's Emergency Assistance Fund](#), a programme that supports people who have been impacted financially by crime. They predominantly support women and children fleeing domestic abuse situations and provides much-needed goods and services. **Wallace** delved into how the fund works, how they collaborate with partners to help it reach people who could benefit from the fund, how they know the programme is working effectively, and how they are able to ensure continued funding.

Social Event

[Conference Dinner at Alcântara Café](#)

A Conference Dinner was held on 22 May at the emblematic Alcântara Café. The event provided participants with the opportunity to connect in an exquisite location. The dinner offered guests the chance to choose from a selection of traditional quality dishes.

Conference Evaluation

An evaluation survey was carried out following the conference. Question one asked participants to note their agreement on four following statements.

Out of 40 responses, 77.5% strongly agreed that the conference was well organized , 47.5% strongly agreed that participation and interaction was encouraged, 50% strongly agreed that the content was interesting, and 72% strongly agreed that the practical details of the event were well communicated. (see figure 1).

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following statements regarding the **organisation of the event**:

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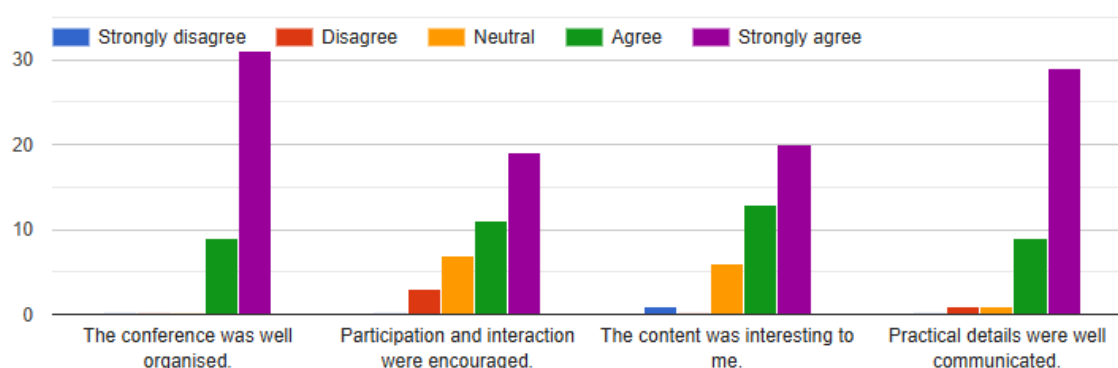


Figure 1. Summary of replies to question: "Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following statements regarding the organisation of the event"

In general, participants were satisfied with the content and topics of the panel discussion. Panel 1 "Do International Instruments Work for Victims?": 35% were very satisfied and 45% were satisfied; Panel 2 "Mainstreaming Victim Issues in IT for Inclusive Solutions": 37.5% were very satisfied and 45% were satisfied; Panel 3 "Inclusive Solutions for Crime Victims – Elderly Victims as a Key Example": 47.5% were very satisfied and 45% were satisfied (see figure 2).



Please rate your satisfaction with the **topic and content of each panel discussion**:

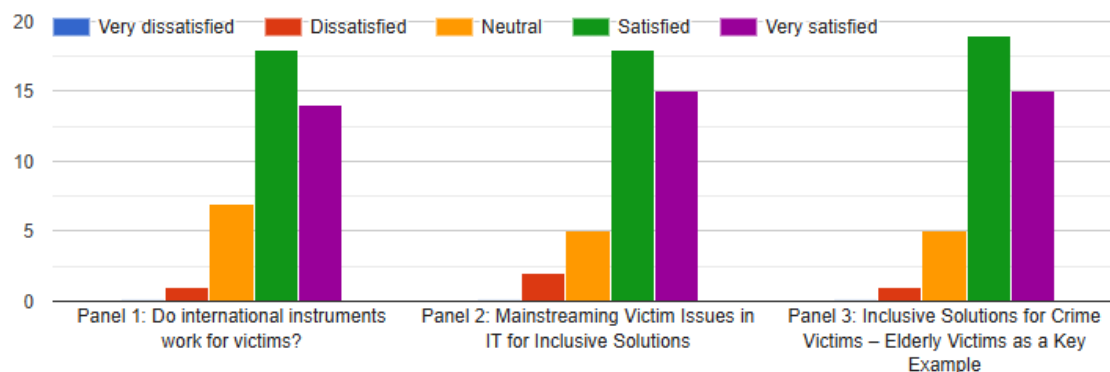


Figure 2. Summary of replies to question "Please rate your satisfaction with the topic and content of each panel discussion"

The responds regarding the parallel sessions were also generally favourable. From the 18 people that attended the session 1.1 "Transforming Victim Support Through International Cooperation", 67% were very satisfied and 17% were satisfied. From the 17 people that attended the session 1.2 "How national frameworks can be effectively implemented into practical, on-the-ground practices? From Legislation to Implementation", 41% were very satisfied and 35% were satisfied. From the 11 people that attended parallel sessions 2.1 "Inclusive Solutions for Crime Victims: Protecting Children from Sexual Crimes", 45% were very satisfied and 27% were satisfied. From the 28 people that attended parallel session 2.2 "How AI and Tech Can Strengthen Victim Support and Crime Prevention for a Safer Future?", 50% were very satisfied and 36% were satisfied (see figure 3).



Please rate your satisfaction with the **topic and content of each parallel session**:

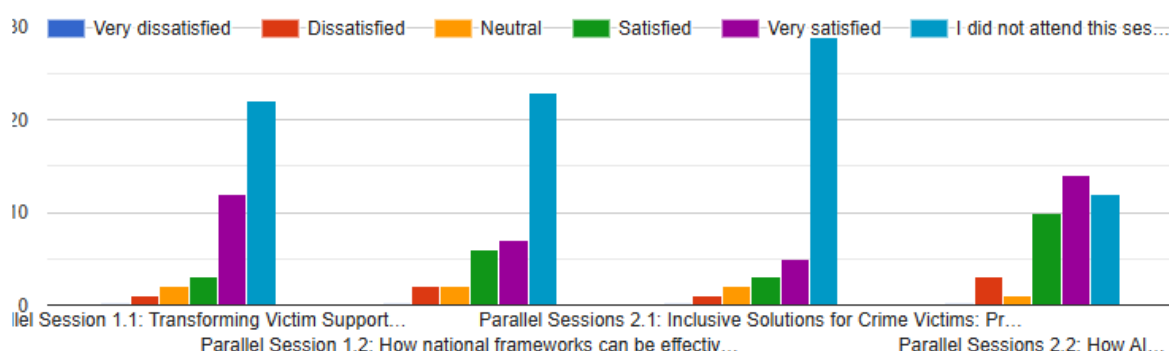


Figure 3. Summary of replies to the question "Please rate your satisfaction with the topic and content of each parallel session"

Feedback on the social events programme (see figure 4) as well as the main conference activities, including icebreaker sessions, coffee speed talks and the workshop programme (see figure 5), was also gathered.

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Please rate your satisfaction with the **social events**.

Only complete this question for the events you have participated in.

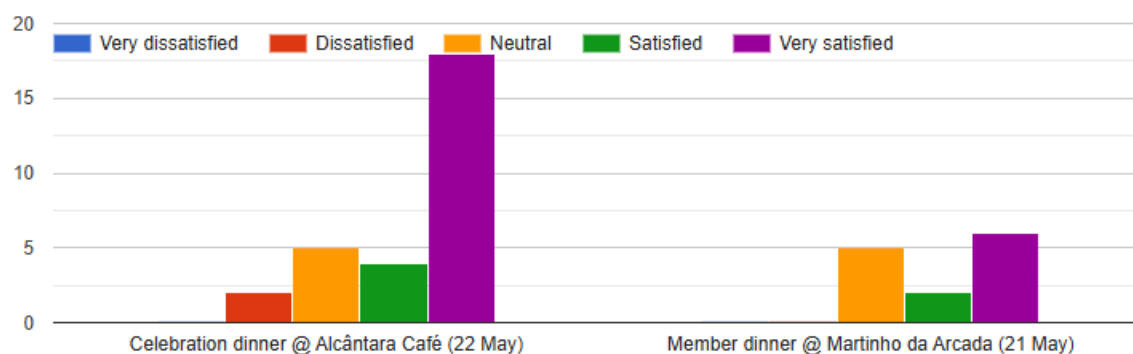


Figure 4. Summary of replies to the question "Please rate your satisfaction with the social events."

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Please rate your satisfaction with the **icebreaker sessions, coffee speed talks and workshop programme**.

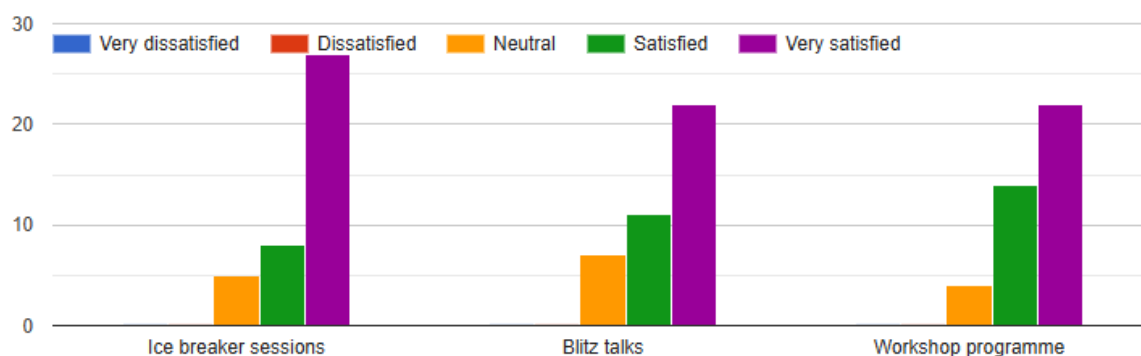


Figure 5. Summary of replies to the question "Please rate your satisfaction with the icebreaker sessions, coffee speed talks and workshop programme."

Participants' feedback

"I loved the plurality of formats used - talking from a perspective of someone who organises conferences, I know how much more work this must have created, but it was worth it! Also, thank you for not shying away from difficult topics, and still talking about what's next, even after 35 years of hard work for victims and survivors."

"Interesting to hear about how people work in different countries."

"Well planned, good atmosphere, wonderful surroundings"

"I'm more into the blitz talks and de workshops instead of the plenary sessions. The blitztalks and workshops are more focused on a certain topic which you can choose according your interests. Splendid host city, setting and organisation! Thanks a lot."

"It was a great event! Thank you very much for the organization."

"As all previous conferences the VSE conference in Lisbon was awesome. Always inspiring, bringing new perspectives, organised in the best way and bringing a family of people together who give all they have to improve victims' rights and support. An honour to have participated once again!"

"Great atmosphere, very well organized, good for networking"

"I was very satisfied with this year's conference, including Invictum, all the session were really interesting and knowing that there is a big pool people that are working worldwide and connected with the sole purpose of helping people made me very happy"

"I was able to take back more than I expected from the conference, a lot of fresh ideas and new contacts, always a plus!!!"

"The conference was exceptionally well-organized and deeply enriching—an impactful experience from start to finish."

"This was my first time attending an international conference, and I consider the experience to be incredibly valuable. I deeply appreciate the work of everyone dedicated to supporting victims – their

commitment and expertise are truly admirable. Many of the speakers were a great source of inspiration for me, and I will strive to apply the insights I gained within the Czech context. Supporting victims in coping with trauma is extremely important and must not be overlooked. Thank you for the opportunity to be part of such a meaningful event, and I look forward to next year's edition."

"The conference was extremely well organised with expert speakers and ample opportunity to network - the perfect combination."

"A significant moment of reflection and exchange of experiences, with a 360-degree perspective on victims as protagonists."

"It was a great opportunity to meet so many different professionals from so different country's, organisations and backgrounds. It's so inspiring en gives such a lot motivation to improve our support for victims."

"Excellent hosting, Lisbon was a great venue. Great discussions and networking. Thanks for a great conference."

"inspiring, encouraging and empowering"

Sponsors

Issured Ltd.

[Issured](#) is a UK based digital transformation company specialising in the design, development and delivery of business change; data exploitation solutions; cyber security services and innovative software products.



Originating from a background in defence and security, Issured has delivered a number of major national policing programmes and services within the UK focusing on Counter Terrorism, Digital Investigation and Digital Public Contact. These have included the extremely successful "Street Safe" web portal where members of the public can report unsafe areas within their neighbourhoods enabling the police and councils to combat crime and anti-social behaviour.



Most recently Issured has developed the innovative Mea Digital Evidence Integrity suite of products to provide tamper evident remote video interviews and digital evidence capture and recording. In an age where generative AI, deep fake and digital disinformation has started to erode society's trust in digital media, these products have been developed to underpin trust and confidence that the digital evidence used within policing and other legal and support services cannot be manipulated.

Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian

[Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian](#), an international foundation, based in Portugal, which promotes the development of individuals and organisations, through art, science, education, and charity, for a more equitable and sustainable society.



Turismo de Lisboa

[The Lisbon Tourism Association – Visitors & Convention Bureau](#) was established in 1997 and its main objectives are:

- The sustained tourism development in its area of intervention;
- The promotion of Lisbon as a tourist destination in leisure articles;
- The promotion of Lisbon as a venue for congresses, fairs and as an incentive trip destination;
- The provision of Information and support for visiting tourists.



Sheraton Lisboa Hotel Spa

[Sheraton Lisboa Hotel Spa](#) is located in Lisbon's city center just a 10-minute walk from downtown Baixa. It offers luxurious rooms, spa with a fitness facilities and exterior pool.



Lisbon Marriott Hotel

Featuring an outdoor swimming pool and a relaxing garden area, the large 4-star [Lisbon Marriott Hotel](#) offers elegant accommodation with city views. It is a 10-minute drive from Lisbon's Humberto Delgado International Airport.



International Conference Alerts

[International Conference Alerts](#) provides information about conferences worldwide. These events offer excellent opportunities to exchange ideas and knowledge across various sectors and give all attendees the chance to network with experts and researchers.



NECX

[NECX](#) is transforming how individuals access victim services, making it easier than ever to find support, connect with safe community groups, and navigate critical resources—all in one secure, trauma-



informed platform. Our mobile app empowers users with a nationwide service directory, secure messaging, AI-guided support, and private community spaces, ensuring they can safely seek help on their own terms.

For those facing crisis, NECX removes the barriers that often make finding support overwhelming. Whether connecting with advocacy groups, accessing crisis services, or managing multiple service providers, users can take control of their journey with confidence. NECX prioritizes privacy, security, and accessibility, safeguarding personal information while fostering stronger, more connected communities.

By bridging gaps between victims, service providers, and support networks, NECX creates a collaborative, empowering ecosystem where no one has to navigate hardship alone.

Buyhearts

Founded in 1983, [Buyhearts inc.](#) has been dedicated to producing high-quality products through innovative technology.



Their flagship product, *Nalclip*, has been distributed worldwide for the past 40 years, contributing to the company's growth as an industry leader. With a commitment to sincerity and excellence, Buyhearts continues to offer luxury stationery designed with precision and care.

