



Cypriot National Report

In order to contribute to the effective and coherent application of EU criminal law in the area of the rights of victims of crime and, in particular, to the implementation and practical application of the Directive 2012/29/EU.

Contents

Author	3
Abstract	3
Introduction and background	4
Methodology.....	5
Main structure and principles of the National Judicial System	6
Role and Duties of Prosecutors	7
Structure of Courts.....	7
National and European Legislation to support victims of violence and crimes.....	9
Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime	9
Victims of Trafficking and Exploitation.....	9
Sexual abuse and exploitation of children and child pornography	11
Victims of domestic violence.....	13
National agencies: Law and responsibilities based on legislation.....	14
Ministry of Health	14
Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance	14
Ministry of Education and Culture	15
Ministry of Justice and Public Order	15
Non-Governmental services providing victim support services.....	16
Analysis of the national legal provisions transposing the Directive into the national legal order	17
Main changes, gaps and challenges in implementing the Directive in the National Criminal Justice System.....	17
Gaps/weak points.....	18
Challenges	19
Recommendations for the effective implementation of the Directive.....	20
Conclusions	22
SupportVoC Interviewees list:	23
Support Services in Cyprus	24
Bibliography.....	30
Appendices.....	30

Author

Ms. Christine Mavrou, LL.B (Hons) and LL.M (Hons) in International and Comparative Law.

Abstract

In the National Report on Cyprus in regards of the Rights of Victims of Crime, our researchers have examined the available support services and the rights they have in relation to the Directive 2012/29/EU. The analysis of the Cypriot Legislative Framework (Law on the Adoption of Minimum Standards on Rights, Support and Protection of Victims of Crime), in relation to the Directive 2012/29/EU, also includes interviews with professionals who come into contact with victims of crime. Although there is now a comprehensive legislative framework for victims of crime, it is often not reflected in practice. The fact that we have no standardised procedures in Cyprus for all victims of crime, suggests that the range of victim support services is limited. The research mainly shows the limited staff of the support services as well as the inadequacy of the support bodies involved, leading to further victimisation and violation of the rights of victims of crime.

Introduction and background

The National Report on Cyprus was prepared within the framework of the European Commission - DG Justice and Consumers (Ref JUST - AG - 2016 - 760641), which funded SupportVoC program: Developing a General Model of Support Services for the Victims of Crime in order to examine the challenges that are encountered. The program seeks to contribute to the effective and consistent application of EU criminal law on the rights of victims of crime. In particular, first of all, the main objective is to contribute to the practical implementation of Directive 2012/29/EU, which will provide for the development of a model and standard operating procedures for a general victim support services model that are flexible and adaptable to a different national or regional context. Secondly, the project aims to promote cooperation between competent authorities and other bodies or organisations contacting victims.

Due to the increasing flow of refugees and immigrants in recent years, trafficking in human beings and the sudden increase in hate crimes have created a new environment that needs to be addressed through changes and new measures, particularly with regard to victim support, which is of fundamental importance.

Directive 2012/29/EU establishes minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, according to which Member States should ensure that victims and their family members have access to general assistance from specialists, according to their needs. In order to contribute to the effective and consistent application of EU criminal law in the field of the rights of victims of crime, in particular the implementation and practical ratification of the Directive 2012/29/EU, “Hope For Children” CRC Policy Center and other partners, coordinated by the University of Barcelona, are implementing the SupportVoC project in Cyprus, Greece, Bulgaria and Italy with the aim of developing a model and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for generic victim support services that will be flexible and adaptable to the different national or regional contexts as well as promoting cooperation between competent authorities and other agencies in contact with victims.

European-level measures that can contribute to tackling violence including the EU Directive on Victims of Crime (2012/29/EU) and the *Convention on the Prevention of and Fight against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (The Convention of Constantinople)*. The EU Directive on Victims of Crime, adopted in 2012, sets minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime in the EU and makes explicit reference to victims of gender violence, victims of sexual violence and victims of violence within a close relationship.

Although the EU Directive applies to all victims, it makes specific reference to victims of gender-based violence and other vulnerable victims, while also referring to the possibility of multiple vulnerability, such as women with migrant backgrounds. The Directive aims to provide the basis for the development of targeted anti-violence measures at national level in order to meet the needs of women who have suffered violence, both in terms of victim support and interventions in the criminal procedure (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32012L0029>).

It is also important to note that until recently the protection and setting of minimum standards for crime victims in the European Union was based on Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA of the 15th of March 2001 on the standing of victims in criminal matters procedures. The Framework Decision provided for minimum rights for victims of crime during criminal proceedings but did not go far enough with regard to the protection of victims and their rights. Thus, in June 2011, the Council of the European Union adopted a resolution on the drafting of a roadmap to strengthen the rights and protection of victims,

particularly in criminal proceedings, known as the Budapest Road Map. The annex to the Budapest Road Map provided for a series of actions to be taken to develop and protect the rights of victims in the European Union. The roadmap was also mentioned in the Framework Decision as it was needed in the Council's view to supplement and revise it as it was felt that new legislation was needed to protect the rights of victims. As a result, the Victims' Directive has been developed, which replaced the Council Framework Decision 2001/220 / JHA of the 15th of March 2001 on the standing of victims in criminal proceedings (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32001F0220>).

The limited range of the crime support services, as well as the lack of knowledge and understanding of the traumatic psychological situation of the victims, leads to the ineffective implementation of the national and European legal framework (the Victims Directive 2012/29/EU) in Cyprus, of victims to justice. The Directive aims to ensure that victims of crime, having received the necessary information, support and protection on a non-discriminatory basis and on an individual basis, are able to participate in the criminal proceedings.

We witness the inconsistency of the services involved, which adds to the problem and leads to the mistreatment of the victims, since there are cases where they may be called upon to give testimony to the crime committed against them, several times. This leads to further victimisation and violation of their rights. Therefore, there is no proper monitoring of services and a holistic assistance in supporting the victims.

The Directive 2012/29/EU provides a solid basis for the development of targeted measures to combat violence at State level, in order to meet the needs of women who have been subjected to violence, both in terms of support to victims and interventions in criminal justice.

The purpose of this report is to analyse the Cypriot reality (as reports will be produced through the program in other EU member states) in line with the 2012/29/EU Directive on the rights and protection of victims of crime and the implementation of the general victim support services, as well as the analysis of the possibilities and weaknesses of victim support through Cypriot support mechanisms. The project also contributes to the review and analysis of national legal frameworks on the rights and protection of victims of crime and their implementation.

Methodology

In the framework of the research, our researchers have examined the Cypriot legislation on supporting crime victims. Consequently, the first part of the research focused on the provision of victim support services in line with Directive 2012/29/EU and whether this is reflected in Cypriot legislation ("*The Minimum Standards on Rights, Support and Protection of Victims of Crime Law* "). The position of minor and adult victims is examined through this research. Although all the laws applicable to adults apply to minors, they are recognised by the Republic of Cyprus as well as by European law as vulnerable groups, so there is more protection when it comes to minor victims as this will be communicated later in the national report. It is also the main reason why we see the legislation and services provided by the Ministries, holistically, without separating them in parts concerning the adult and what the minor victims except the *Law on Preventing and Combating Sexual Abuse, Sexual Child Exploitation and Child Pornography (Law 91 (I) 2014)*. This can be seen through interviews # 05 and # 011 where, as far as the Crime Combatting Department of the Police is concerned, the officers pointed out that all victims of crime are informed about their rights through a form.

The second part of the research focused on specific groups of professionals who are members of national legal committees and policy makers, representatives of criminal justice services as well as civil servants and representatives of non-governmental organisations. Our researchers have attempted to implement twenty interviews with officials of the above-mentioned categories as stated in the European SupportVoC project.

The officers are professionals working in providing victim support services from various non-governmental organisations such as SPAVO (Cyprus Family Trafficking Prevention and Combating), Cyprus STOP Trafficking, the Migrant Information Center (MIC) as well as professionals from the Children's House and staff from the “Homes for Hope”.

In addition to this, our researchers contacted professionals from the Law Office of the Republic of Cyprus, Judge of the Nicosia Assize Court, the Ministry of Justice and Public Order (police officers), the Ministry of Health (mental health professionals), the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance - Services Social Welfare (social service officers), professional lawyers including one of the provincial presidents of the Cyprus Bar Association, experienced in criminal cases.

This was also the most difficult part of the research as the obstacles faced by our researchers had to do with communication with professional groups. This may be due to their busy timetable as they are members of national legal committees and policy makers. As a result, this caused a lot of delay in conducting the interviews, as our researchers could not even communicate with them, neither by email nor by phone. Most of the interviewees involved, requested that they not be recorded mainly because they were giving examples of cases they had faced in their professional field and for purposes of protecting victims' data.

In addition, there have been cases where the proposed interviewees either refused to give us an interview or never responded to letters and/or emails. For example, the Ministry of Justice and Public Order - which was the authorized body for the harmonization of Cypriot legislation with the provisions of Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council - (Decision No. 79.515 of 28.9.2015), replied in writing to our researchers that the practical implementation of the Law is not within their own Ministry. Consequently, the experience of this Ministry cannot be reflected in this report as it has not been possible to get statements from an Officer who was involved in the harmonisation of the European Directive with Cypriot legislation.

Therefore, the research is limited in terms of policymakers' opinion. However, interviews with clinical psychologists, social workers and lawyers in contact with victims are valuable as we actually perceive what the victims are experiencing with time-consuming procedures as well as the under-staffing of the services.

Main structure and principles of the National Judicial System

The Attorney-General of the Republic, in addition to being the Legal Counsel of the Republic, heads the Legal Service and simultaneously performs the duties of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The Legal Service of the State, chaired by the Attorney General and Lawyers, some of whom are specialised in Criminal Law and are handling cases brought by Assize Courts. In all cases, the Attorney General is informed and gives the relevant guidelines.

Apart from the members of the Legal Service, the duties of Public Prosecutor are performed by persons who have been recruited as members of the Cyprus Police Force, who are legal persons and are qualified to practice law. Despite the police identity of these persons, they are at the General Prosecutor's office and accountable to him for the work they perform as

Public Prosecutors at the time of the Office of the Public Prosecutor. The Attorney-General of the Republic has the same powers in relation to the work done by such persons as that which he has for the Attorneys of the Legal Service.

In exceptional cases, the Attorney General has the power to assign the handling of specific cases to qualified lawyers practicing the profession of the lawyer.

Role and Duties of Prosecutors

The prosecution service, is directed to lawyers of the Law Office of the Police Force, without, of course, excluding the possibility, in certain cases, that this task is assigned to one of the members of the Law Office (advocates/lawyers). The prosecution service the Assize Courts is directed by advocates in the Law Office. Regardless of who directs the prosecuting authority, they all come under the jurisdiction of the Attorney General, who may intervene at any given moment and may occasionally discontinue criminal proceedings.

The Law Office is headed by the Attorney General, assisted by the Deputy Attorney General, followed by the Attorneys of the Republic, Senior Counsels of the Republic and Counsels of the Republic. One of the Attorneys of the Republic heads the Criminal Law Section, again reporting to the Attorney General.

Hearings take the form of oral argument. The prosecution service presents its evidence and the witnesses called by the prosecution service undergo examination, cross-examination and re-examination. Once all witnesses have been called by the prosecution service, the court is required to rule on whether the prosecution service has a prima facie case. If it does, then the accused is called to enter a plea and the court advises him that he can call his own witness and testify under oath, in which case both the accused's witnesses and the accused are cross-examined by the prosecution service. Otherwise, he may give an unsworn statement from the dock, in which case there is no cross-examination.

The court hands down judgment at the end of the hearing. In the case of an acquittal, the accused is acquitted and released. In the case of a conviction, the defence is given the opportunity to plead for a reduced sentence and, once the proceedings have been completed, the court hands down an appropriate sentence (https://e-justice.europa.eu/content_legal_professions-29-cy-en.do?member=1).

Structure of Courts

Supreme Court

The Supreme Court was created on the basis of the provisions of the *Administration of Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Law 1964 [Law 33/1964]* after the Presidents of both the Supreme Court and the Supreme Constitutional Court had resigned, thereby basically dissolving the two courts in question, as the representatives of the Turkish Community in the various bodies of state failed to attend and consent to the necessary decisions.

The members of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President of the Republic of Cyprus. There are currently 13 members, one of whom is appointed as President. Persons of impeccable character with at least 12 years' commendable service as member of the legal profession can be appointed as members of the Supreme Court.

As a result, the Supreme Court acts as a Second Instance Court in appeals from decisions of all other Courts of the Republic of Cyprus, but also acts as the Court of First Instance in various matters, such as Administrative Law and the Naval Court. It also deals with issues of *certiorari*, *mandamus* and others, while supervising the smooth functioning of all the other

Courts of the Republic of Cyprus and exercising, *inter alia*, disciplinary control over the Members of the Judiciary.

Assize Courts

The Assize Court is the Supreme Court of First Instance of the Republic and consists of three Judges, a President, a Senior District Judge and a District Judge. The members of the Assize Court are appointed by the Supreme Court for two years and belong respectively to the ranks of the Presidents of the District Court, Senior District Judges and District Judges. Thus, except for certain specific very serious offenses, each Assize Court has jurisdiction to hear at first instance all offenses punishable by the Penal Code or any other law and committed within the boundaries of the Republic or the Dominant Border Areas and concern Cypriots either as offenders either as victims or in any other country while the accused was in the service of the Republic or on a ship or airplane located in the Republic or in such other places and under such conditions which can be predicted by law.

District Courts

In each province of the Republic of Cyprus there are District Courts with unlimited jurisdiction, except of the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and the jurisdiction of the Special Courts mentioned below. Provincial Judges are distinguished from Presidents of District Courts, Senior District Judges and District Judges. Judges of District Courts are appointed, transferred and promoted by the Supreme Court. A District Court composed of a President has jurisdiction to hear and decide at first instance any action under his local jurisdiction.

Any Senior District Judge or District Judge has the authority (subject to certain exceptions) to decide any claim in which the disputed amount or the value of the disputed dispute does not exceed € 500.000,00 for the Supreme District Judge and for the District Judge, € 100.000.

The criminal jurisdiction of the District Courts extends to all offenses committed within the province of that court and for which the sentence provided for by law does not exceed a maximum of five years' imprisonment or a fine not exceeding € 50,000.00 or both, and may also order damages to the victim not exceeding € 6,000.00.

All decisions of District Courts, whether criminal or political, are subject to appeal before the Supreme Court without any limitations.

Family Courts

The Family Courts which are set up on the basis of the Family Courts Law (Law 23/90), are three members and each of them is staffed by a president and two associates. These people have legal training and before the appointment they must have had the profession of law prosperous. Thus, the jurisdiction of Family Courts extends to almost all matrimonial differences. The Jurisdiction of the Court of Audit of Rent is limited to resolving disputes in the case of buildings subject to the rented area. The jurisdiction of the Labour Disputes Court extends only in relations between an employer and an employee, particularly in cases where the employee is dismissed and claims that the dismissal is unfair. The jurisdiction of the Military Court is the prosecution of criminal cases involving members of the National Guard or where there is a violation of the rules of the National Guard.

All decisions of the above Courts are subject to appeal before the Supreme Court.

(https://e-justice.europa.eu/content_legal_professions-29-cy-en.do?member=1)

National and European Legislation to support victims of violence and crimes

Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime

The Directive aims to ensure that victims and their families are supported, as well as ensuring their ability to participate in the process through the full and adequate information of the victim. Thus, the Directive aims at eliminating discrimination in dealing with victims.

As mentioned above, the Directive applies to all victims of crime but recognises some particular categories of victims as we are called upon to face the challenges they may face because of the specificity of the most vulnerable groups. For example, Chapter 4 of the Directive focuses on women victims of domestic violence who are identified as victims with special protection needs. Member States are required to take measures to protect victims against repeated victimisation and intimidation as well as against the dangers of emotional or psychological and/or mental harm and protection of their dignity during their examination or filing. The Directive provides for the examination of victims to be carried out without undue delay, while examinations should be kept to a minimum. Therefore, it is underlined that an individual assessment needs to be made of the special protection needs of victims, since they should be examined in specially designed areas by trained staff. Also, if the victim would prefer, trained professionals should be of the same gender.

Until recently, the Cypriot legal system did not have a comprehensive single and coherent legal framework for protecting women from all forms of violence they may face, including harassment or stalking by strangers or former partners.

Victims of Trafficking and Exploitation

Cyprus has signed and ratified, by law, all international and European conventions dealing with prostitution or trafficking in human beings and other related illegal activities.

The Cypriot legislation protects the victims of trafficking and exploitation of persons under the *Law N. 60 (I) / 2014*. The *Prevention and Combating of Trafficking and Exploitation of Persons and the Protection of Victims Law of 2014 (Law 60 (I) / 2014)* aims at "taking measures to prevent, suppress and combat the offenses of trafficking, exploitation and abuse of persons, the protection and support of victims of such offenses, the establishment of control mechanisms and the promotion of international cooperation the application of the above measures" (https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/cyprus_law_60_i_2014.pdf).

The criminal offense of trafficking in persons is defined in the law as a felony and is punishable by imprisonment of no more than fifteen years in the case of adult trafficking.

N.60 (I)/2014 protects victims of trafficking and exploitation from criminal prosecution, since their involvement in the felony was a direct consequence of the fact that they were victims of offenses. Third-country nationals who are victims are not prosecuted in the event of offenses directly related to their status as victims, and in particular whether the commission of an offense is illegal entry, illegal residence, illegal employment or employment in breach of their working conditions. Third-country nationals or citizens of the European Union are also granted a temporary residence permit or restricted registration certificate, where appropriate. Consequently, any victim, irrespective of his or her nationality - either possesses the manifestation of his/her identity card or not, provided that he/she does not have sufficient resources, has the right to physical, social and psychological rehabilitation and support.

In cases where the victim is considered to be at risk from the perpetrator prior to his or her detention or imprisonment, the Police shall inform the victim and take appropriate precautions.

If the victim does not have sufficient resources to access legal advice immediately, then free legal aid is provided. The Republic of Cyprus shall reimburse any costs arising from the involvement of the victims in the criminal proceedings. In the event that the victim lodges a witness, appropriate measures are taken to protect the victim and his/her family during and after the criminal proceedings have ended. When the victim is a minor, he/she is entitled to receive free medical care.

It is important to mention that victims have the right to compensation for the criminal offenses committed against them as well as for the violations of their human rights.

The offender has also the corresponding civil liability in respect of the payment of special and general compensation to the victims as well as any arrears due to the exploitation of the victims' work. In cases where the victim dies, the parents or dependents of the victim have an institutionally conducting right to compensation.

Regarding adult victims, in particular victims of trafficking, the Law Office of Cyprus stresses that there is no legal basis for supporting victims, except that the agency is responsible for how soon the case will be dealt with. The Attorney General is responsible for the final decision.

It is emphasised that the psychological support of adult trafficking victims is more difficult, since they are time consuming and victims are usually tired and want to return to their homelands. During the legislative procedure, the Law Office provides only advisory services to the responsible officers who are responsible for the procedures for the technical integration of the Directive into the national legal order. However, the interviewee notes that although the European Directive has not worked 100% in practice, its incorporation is well on track (Interview # 03).

Adult victims of trafficking are handled by the Office of Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings. The victim is interviewed; the Office identifies the initial positions of the victims, gives them time to think about whether they want to make a complaint, and if so, the Office of Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings files a testimony, investigates the case and victims are provided with support and preparation for the subsequent trial. Usually because they are victims from other countries, after the trial, they return to their home-countries. For victims of sexual abuse, police and social welfare services are taken over by the involvement of clinical psychologists and forensic scientists. They are supervised and prepared for the filmed filing and for the court. Regarding the judicial process, the basic protection that these individuals have, is to testify in the absence of the accused (Interview # 01).

However, we also had a different view from a non-governmental organisation officer who, for example, recognises the fact that because most victims are immigrants, victims have no access to the legislative system, and even if they do, there criminal procedure is not followed since it takes too long, therefore, they do not proceed to taking the case to Court (Interview # 12).

Regarding adult victims, although there are shelters offering shelter and food, access to services is time consuming and causes emotional frustration because it is a more difficult process compared to procedures for minors (Interview # 03).

However, there is the view that, the strong points of current victim support services at national level, are that there is more coordination between agencies in regards victims of trafficking and sexual abuse, since there is trained staff with experience in such cases (Interview # 06).

Sexual abuse and exploitation of children and child pornography

As noted above, Cyprus has signed and ratified by law all international and European conventions dealing with prostitution or trafficking and other illegal activities.

Therefore, for the purposes of harmonising the Cyprus Law with the Directives of the European Union and in particular with the 2001 Council Framework Decision on the Status of Victims in Criminal Proceedings (2001/220) and the 2011 Directive/93 of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating the sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, the Cypriot Parliament has adopted the *Law on Preventing and Combating Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography (Act 91 (I)/2014)*.

The Law on Preventing and Combating Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography protects children who are victims of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or child pornography. The aim of *Law 91(I)/2014* is "to take measures to prevent, suppress and combat the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children, child pornography and child abuse for sexual purposes, the protection and support of victims of such the creation of mechanisms for the control and supervision of victims and victims and the promotion of international cooperation in the implementation of the above measures" (http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/indexes/2014_1_91.html).

Additionally, the law provides a section in which actions should be undertaken to ensure the protection of child victims. If necessary, the court may order, for a period of time, the removal of the victim and his/her placement in a safe place either during or after the case. In addition, the court may issue a decree, explicitly prohibiting the offender from approaching or entering a particular range of distance or staying in the victim's home or place of residence or in places visited by children. In addition to physical protection, the law provides for the protection of victims and criminalisation for their involvement in a felony if it was a consequence of their victimisation.

Where the child victim cannot be represented by his or her parents or guardians, or in the case of the unaccompanied minor victim, the court should appoint the Commissioner for the Protection of the Rights of the Child so that the child has legal representation for the framework of the criminal investigation or proceeding.

In addition, if the victim does not have sufficient financial resources, the right to legal advice is not cancelled. Therefore, the right of victims to free legal assistance is indisputable and for this reason the costs incurred by the victims' participation in the criminal proceedings as witnesses are compensated by the Republic of Cyprus. If the victim or a witness of the case is at risk due to this, steps are taken to ensure that the identity of the victim and/or witness is not disclosed as well as measures to protect the victim and his/her family during and after the criminal proceedings have ended.

All services involved should take appropriate measures, within the framework of their competences, to work together to support child victims both, physical and psychosocial rehabilitation in the short and long term.

Furthermore, a victim residing outside the Republic of Cyprus, if his/her case has been transferred to the State authorities, holds the same rights as if he/she resided in the Republic

of Cyprus. In such a case, the complaint shall be investigated in the same way as would have been investigated if the victim was a resident in the Republic of Cyprus.

Adding to this, there is the right of victims for an institutionally conducive right to compensation for the perpetration of criminal offenses and for the violation of the victim's human rights. The offender also has the corresponding civil liability for general compensation to the victims. If the victim has died, then the institutionally conducive right to compensation lies with the parents or the manager of the victim's property and/or the holders of parental responsibility.

Also, the founding of Support Fund for Minor Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse - following the 2014 law - offers resources to provide compensation to victims in cases where they cannot be compensated on the basis of enforcement measures (http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/indexes/2014_1_91.html).

Minors are also prepared for the hearing of the trial. The judges do not have specialised training and the courtroom is not child-friendly, but for cases involving sexual abuse of minors, the judges attend specific trainings and seminars. An effort is made to create a safe environment so that the child victim can testify. According to the interviewee, there is no collaboration with other organizations or agencies since they will witness the case. The only contact that may exist with other services is in the context of training seminars. The provision of support to victims, whether minors or adults, witnesses to the court, does not fall within the remit of the Court. With regard to minor victims and particularly victims with mental disabilities who are not properly supported or because their families refuse to give their consent to promote the complaint, there is no good legal basis for them to go to court to appoint someone else to take over child and promote the complaint (Interview # 01).

When the Law Office is involved in a case at the pre-trial stage, there is contact with both the victim and his/her family. As far as minor victims are concerned, during the pre-trial procedure the Law Office provides support to the victim during the visual interview and preparation for the upcoming hearing of the case. During the trial, Law Office takes on the victim's protection: the hearing of the case is done in "closed doors"; takes care that there is no contact between the victim and the offender and ensures that there is respect the child's rights during the Attorney's questions through objections. The Law Office of the Republic of Cyprus operates as the "Protection –net for the child". Although there is no clear and established legal line on how the cases are dealt with, each case is approached and treated differently and, in the interviewee's view, "victim support is a self- taught process". Each officer is responsible for dealing with each case and the Attorney General is responsible for the final decision, depending on the seriousness of the case (Interview # 03).

In order to support minor victims of sexual harassment/abuse and/or exploitation, we have inaugurated in 2017 the Children's House, which provides services for the psychological and social rehabilitation of juvenile victims. The Children's House is the Icelandic model (Barnahus). The Children's House includes experts from all relevant government agencies as well as other professionals. "Hope for Children" CRC Policy Center is in charge of the management and operation of the House in cooperation with the government departments of the Republic of Cyprus, such as the Welfare Office, the Police and the Mental Health Services, and in some cases with the Ministry of Education and Culture with educational psychologists as well as with the Ministry of Health for psychologists and/or child psychiatrists as well as with children examining minor victims.

This has been done in the framework of the National Strategy for the Rights of the Child and the National Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Violence in Schools, which has been approved by the Council of Ministers to fill the pre-existing protection gap and support in every way to children as they are defined as vulnerable members of civil society.

It is important to mention that the Children's House is the third created in a European state and for the first time in Cyprus, all services involved in dealing with cases of sexual abuse with the aim of directly accessing the minor victims to the necessary services that are staffed by a team of qualified professionals, and through a sheltered framework to reduce any chance of re-traumatization and stigmatization.

Thus, the Children's House comes to fill the gap that existed in our state services as the primary objective is to avoid unnecessary suffering and re-victimization of the children who are victims of sexual abuse. It is the place where the child is at the center of attention and the processes serve the child and not vice versa. It is also an area in which the investigation of the offense is multidisciplinary with the main aim being to support and treat and not focus only on the legal dimension of the process.

The Children's House first contact is with the child and the "safe" parent or guardian. After the explanation of the procedures starts, the child prepares for the criminal process. The "House" works closely with both the Social Welfare Services as well as with the Police after the case has begun to be handled by a social worker in the House. There is also a great deal of cooperation with the Court and with schools as well in some instances (Interview # 08).

Victims of domestic violence

Victims of domestic violence are protected by the Republic of Cyprus under the *Law on Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law of 2000 and 2004 (119(I)/2000)*. The law provides that there should be an appointment of appropriate persons through the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance so that complaints and reports from family counselors are dealt with. Some of the tasks of Family Counsellors are as follows:

- Investigate and receive complaints,
- Carry out investigations and arrange arrangements where the perpetrator/accused will stay or where his/her family will find shelter if an exclusion order is issued,
- To advise, mediate and guide to ease family problems,
- Report to the Police for the investigation of any criminal offense,
- Make arrangements for immediate medical examination of the complainant,
- When it is a child, and it is considered to be necessary, takes all necessary steps in order for the minor to be evaluated by a psychologist or a child psychiatrist.

If a victim and/or one of the witnesses are considered to be at risk, the hearing of the case takes place in "closed doors" or their testimony might be taken in the absence of the accused/perpetrator after the arrangement has been made so that the accused/perpetrator will have knowledge of the victims' testimony. In the case where the accused harasses the victim or another person who influences the case or investigation of the case of violence or causes mental discomfort/frustration to the victim and/or to a witness of a hypothesis of violence, then you accused/perpetrator will be accused of an additional felony. Consequently, the law protects the victim and his/her identity as well as through the non-publication of name, address, information of the perpetrator or any other information that the identity of the victim could be identified through the media. Therefore, it is also forbidden to deliver, receive or publish copies of the testimonies to or from third parties.

The law also provides for the establishment of the Violence Victims Fund, from which the amount of money originates for the purpose of dealing with immediate needs, victim support and often for finding a place to live/shelter. In addition, the law provides for and allows for the establishment and operation of housing for victims of violence within a secure framework as well as for the legal protection of victims. Under the law, the shelter should

have a certificate of adequacy (http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/upload/legislation/laws_2000_and_2004_en.pdf).

National agencies: Law and responsibilities based on legislation

Ministry of Health

Based on *Law 51(I)/1997*, the Ministry of Health can offer up to € 1,000 medical treatment for victims of violent crimes who may claim compensation from the Republic of Cyprus. Care is provided at all Public Institutions and Services (http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/enop/non-ind/1997_1_51/full.html).

Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance

Control over the supervision of the Fund for Support of Underage Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse belongs to the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance.

Therefore, the Social Welfare Services make sure that support, assistance and protection is provided to a child as soon as they have good reason to believe that any of the offenses stemming from law *N.91 (I) / 2014* may have been committed against him.

The Social Welfare Services is a Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, aiming at ensuring social cohesion and social solidarity, providing social protection, achieving social integration, promoting equal opportunities for all citizens of the Republic of Cyprus, combating poverty and social exclusion and the promotion of the interests of individuals, families and communities (Interview #02).

Law N.60 (I)/2014 provides for the operation of shelters that will serve as the residence of the victims of violence. Under the law, Social Welfare Services must inspect the registration and operation of shelters. However, they may delegate the above responsibilities to a non-governmental organization and /or Local Authorities.

In addition, the Laws *N.91(I)/2014* and *N.60(I)/2014* state that Social Welfare Services are called upon to support the child as well as the family by engaging with other services, since the aim is to ensure the child's best interest when the family resides in the Republic of Cyprus.

It was highlighted by many (if not all) of the interviewees, that the Social Welfare Services do not cover the needs of the victims since there is no real support at their offices (Interviews #04, #05, #06, #12, #13, #14 #15, #16, #17, #18). This has to do with the fact that this department is understaffed as well as the lack of education.

However, the officers of the Social and Welfare Services are responsible for policy issues, the implementation of the legislation, training of staff on the protection of victims of crime, dissemination of information material in a simple and comprehensible language, monitoring of statistics and the monitoring of the needs of victims of crime. At a provincial level, the supervisors have a total responsibility for the operation of the Welfare Services, while the officers are responsible for handling all the cases that the Office undertakes. The duties of the officials and employees as well as the increased powers that can be assigned in individual cases are defined by the Service Manual of Operation. The cooperation of the Social Welfare Services with other organizations providing services is done on the basis of the legislation which defines the national mechanisms and procedures to be followed by each service. As the interviewee said, in the case of victims of crime, either adults or minors, there is a multidisciplinary discussion with various bodies to examine the cases. There are protocols for cooperation with the Police, the Law Office, the Ministry of Health and NGOs. Also, a memorandum of cooperation with the NGO Cyprus STOP Trafficking, SPAVO and the "Hope

For Children" CRC Policy Center is foreseen. In addition, state sponsorship is given to programs on the issue of crime victims. With regard to the situation of both minor and adult victims and their family members in criminal justice processes, the Social Welfare Service offers information (Interview #02).

Ministry of Education and Culture

The Ministry of Education and Culture established the so-called Direct Intervention Group in 2008. The group's objective is to support school teams to directly address serious incidents of violence and delinquency. There is a relevant form that can be completed by the school headquarters stating the basic facts of the incident. If necessary, the data are gathered in a multidisciplinary group with the presence of the children involved in the school and draw up an action plan to manage the incidence of violence and/or delinquency (http://www.moec.gov.cy/dme/programmata/scholiki_paravatikotita/entypa/oap/enimerotiko_oap.pdf).

In addition, the Ministry of Education and Culture has established the Observatory of Violence in the School in 2009. The aim of the Observatory is to record and analyse data on the types of violence that can be encountered in the school environment and the extent that an incident of violence can take.

Ministry of Justice and Public Order

The Cyprus Police is subject to the Ministry of Justice and Public Order under the *Law 91(I)/2014*. Therefore, the Police is required to keep a record of offenders who have committed offense as sexual exploitation and/or child abuse and child pornography.

Beyond that, the Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Office appertain to the Police of Cyprus and aims to address (prevent and suppress) violence in the family as well as the abuse of minors in the family.

Police is also involved in the initial stage of the cases (once a complaint is made) and then the officer responsible refers the victim to other services (mental health services, welfare office, Children's Home, SPAVO etc.) "if necessary", that is, after an officer's assessment (interviews #05 and #11).

As a result, the Police and/or the Social Welfare Services during the first contact with the victim and/or the guardian of the victim are required to inform the parties about their rights, the protection of interests, the actions that may be taken to defend them and they offer as well support services. If the victim asks the Police about the course of the complaint, the Police is obliged to do so by informing the victim and/or the guardians about their case.

When a victim is identified as a victim, the Police may consider it necessary to transfer the victim to the shelter of victims of the Social Welfare Services. As a result, Social Welfare Services are responsible for assessing the situation and for preparing the report that has to be delivered to the case investigator. In addition, after a person has been identified as victim, the Office of Combating Trafficking in Human Beings grants a certificate of recognition for purposes of asserting the rights of the victim.

However, several interviewees have pointed out that in some cases the victims have not received adequate information and/or protection from the Police and therefore, those who can afford it, they turn to private lawyers (Interviews: #04, #10, #14 and #18). Also, some of the interviewees have noticed that firstly the victims come in contact with the police before speaking with a lawyer, so in some cases the Police cannot offer them adequate psychological support and understanding that is their primary need. In addition, it is stressed out that both minor and adult victims need support from the state, as they are often treated with improper

behaviour by police officers who, in some cases, guide the victims so that no complaints are made (Interview # 14).

Non-Governmental services providing victim support services

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Cyprus are completing the gaps left by the government victim support services (as reported by interviewee #15 as well as interviewee #08). Many times, we are witnessing the inability of government agencies to provide support to victims, whether it concerns psychological support, legal assistance, or sometimes residence, when a domestic violence victim cannot return to the place where he or she has been living until recently.

Although we do not have many agencies that provide practical support to the victims, we find that support often lies with these NGOs. For example, we have "Hope For Children" CRC Policy Center under which the Children's Home has been created for minor victims of sexual harassment and/or abuse. As mentioned above, the Children's Home has been working with the Social Welfare Office, the Police, the Mental Health Services and, in some cases, the Ministry of Education and Culture and with Psychologists and/or Child Psychiatrists and pediatricians of the Ministry of Health.

"Hope For Children" CRC Policy Center has undertaken since 2014 the establishment and operation of the private shelters for unaccompanied minors under the name "Homes for Hope" and it provides interdisciplinary and holistic services. Unaccompanied minors housed in the shelters are under the legal guardianship of the Director of Social Welfare Services. *Homes for Hope* operate under the supervision and close cooperation of the Social Insurance Services and they are staffed by specialized professionals in the field of psychology, social work, law and education. In several instances, some of the children housed in the shelters are victims of trafficking for child labor, victims of sexual exploitation or victims of domestic violence. Within Homes for Hope, professionals provide services that can be divided into the following three pillars: Rehabilitation Services, Integration Services and Sustainable Solutions Services.

In addition, the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (SPAVO) offers Shelters which constitute a safe place of temporary residence for women victims of domestic violence as well as for their children who may be in direct physical and psychological danger from individuals of their family environment. These shelters carry out programs aiming at empowering guests so that they can freely point out their needs and make their choices to break the cycle of violence without criticism. Participation in these programs is a prerequisite for the stay of victims of domestic violence in these shelters. The purpose of the Shelters is to ensure calmness, security and, in general, to ensure a pleasant environment for all people.

In addition, SPAVO operates the "Help Line" (1440) for counseling on family violence issues that may involve either the victim or other family members. The center is staffed with psychologists and social workers who are trained in phone communication techniques. Information is provided for other issues related to domestic violence, as well as information on the basic rights and choices of individuals in order to better address the issues that troubles the victims and/or their families.

The Migration Information Center (MIC) is a center that provides counseling services to vulnerable migrants, third-country nationals and asylum seekers across Cyprus. *MIC* supports access services and resources that meet the needs of migrants and emphasizes the building of new skills for their harmonious adaptation to the Cypriot cultural and social environment. According to interviewee #12, the Immigration Information Center is working

on a regular basis with the Information Welfare Office, as well as Red Cross and Future Words Center officials. There is also a partnership with “Hope For Children” CRC Policy Center (Interview #13).

Furthermore, Cyprus Stop Trafficking, a non-governmental and humanitarian organization offers assistance and support to victims of trafficking. They cooperate closely with other NGOs as well as with the Police and the Welfare Office. They offer accommodation and financial assistance to victims of trafficking as well as job search guidance.

Analysis of the national legal provisions transposing the Directive into the national legal order

The Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25th of October 2012 establishes minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime. The Directive has been set up to ensure that victims are informed, supported and protected, and that they are assured of their ability to participate in the criminal proceedings. By extension, the directive also aims at eliminating discrimination when dealing with victims.

Since the publication of the Directive in the EU Member States, the implementation deadline was set for 16 November 2015. In the case of Cyprus, the implementation of the Directive was done with the adoption of the Minimum Standards on Rights, Support and Protection of Victims of Crime Law, by the Cypriot Parliament. The legislation was implemented following a resolution of the Council of Ministers, authorizing the Minister of Justice and Public Order to submit it to the House of Representatives. The legislation went to parliament for resolution on October 14, 2015. Since then, the legislation has been passed four times in the Cypriot Parliament where amendments and adjustments have been proposed. The legislation was eventually passed in 2016 (<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:gskBmXOVar4J:www.mof.gov.cy/mof/gpo/gpo.nsf/All/D54E8892699CC9C2C2257F1100301BA8/%24file/4470%25204%252012%25202015%2520PARARTIMA%252040%2520MEROS%2520I.pdf+%cd=6&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=cy>).

Unfortunately, our researchers have been unable to get more information on the transposition of the Directive into the national legal order since it has not been possible to converse with a large number of policy-makers. However, the Directive has been transposed to the Cypriot legislative framework on the basis of the services offered by the Republic of Cyprus.

Main changes, gaps and challenges in implementing the Directive in the National Criminal Justice System

As reported by one of the interviewees (#04), the harmonization of national laws with the Directive on the situation of victims and the services provided to them has brought about great changes in theory, but in the practice more steps and time are needed for the results to be clear. According to the interviewee #10, the main change is the fact that special measures have been taken to protect witnesses and victims, especially minors, through a videotaped forensic interview that avoids repeated victimization of victims. A main change constitutes the fact that all services come close to the victims, although sometimes coordination and communication between the services is not the best, leading to gaps in relation to the whole process of completing the case.

According to the interviewee #13, the basic change in relation to the condition of victims and the services provided to them is the very existence of a legislative framework, although the mechanisms for its implementation are insignificant. The interviewee #03 emphasizes that

the transposition of the Directive has brought enormous changes in the rights and protection of victims, as the provisions of the previous legislation on protection services and access to them were inadequate. Regarding the legal process, videotaping the forensic interviews of child victims is now compulsory and that has helped to avoid recurring victimization of the children. Also, reference was made to the right of victims to compensation, a right which is specifically enshrined in the European Directive. The main change pointed out by mental health professionals is the gradual change in citizens' attitudes towards dealing with victims of trafficking.

Finally, the main and major change brought about by the harmonization of national laws with the Directive on the condition of victims and the services provided to them is the fact that the Directive covers a wide range of victims while the legislation of 2000. (N. 119(I)/2000) was related only to victims of domestic violence.

Gaps/weak points

Despite the changes brought about by the harmonisation of the Directive with the national legislative framework, gaps have been identified during the research and the interviews with stakeholders and officials, concerning the understaffing of victim support services, and as a consequence, this works against the victims since the delay for action is enormous. However, this may also have to do with the bureaucracy of the services involved. Also, as it can be verified in the rest of the research, researchers have also identified a problem of coordination of services as well as inadequately trained officials who are called upon to offer their services for the benefit of the victims.

Understaffing occurs at the Social Welfare Services, the Police, the Mental Health Services, and the Law Office to a lesser extent. The Social Welfare Services receive hundreds of thousands of cases a year (interview #02), and it is therefore humanly impossible to address personally each case. Also, the absence of monitoring and supporting the officials in the Social Welfare Services and the lack of structures to support all victims of any criminal offence is a challenge that needs to be addressed immediately (Interview #16).

Understaffing also occurs in the Cyprus Police, although, according to them, they manage to hand over the files to the Law Office when they need to. But that does not mean that they have a quick response when a person is a victim of crime. Police staff have been trained, but not to the highest degree nor in a sufficient number. However, the situation differs when the victim is a minor, as with the Children's House the agencies are helping each other.

As mentioned above, the Mental Health Services have also the same problem of understaffing. Although we have practitioners trained to work with both adult and underage victims, unfortunately the volume of cases is enormous compared to the skilled staff who is supposed to act in favor of the victims for the social and psychological support they may need.

Furthermore, professionals who come in contact with victims are often not sufficiently trained for all cases of criminal acts as the Cypriot Government does not count many years of life, let alone the services offered. As a result of inadequate training is the absence of a coordinated multidisciplinary team for all crime victims.

The gaps in current victim support services at national level lies in the delay of services to respond directly to victims' needs, in the fact that service structures are problematic, in the understaffing of Mental Health Services which are excessively managed a large number of cases, the absence of other infrastructure outside the government sector, and generally the quantitative and qualitative subsistence of services (Interview # 08). As the interviewee

underlines, services "can not cope qualitatively and quantitatively with the needs of all victims".

Furthermore, other gaps observed by many interviewees is that the victims get insufficient information concerning their rights, the coordination of services is informal and is done "with the goodwill of the professionals", there is no suitable framework in regards of premises and services that will provide holistic services, the services are understaffed, the bureaucratic nature of services and the lack of promptness in the provision of services (Interview # 06).

However, the main problem lies in the time-consuming procedures and in the fact that the state has too many gaps concerning the support mechanisms, gaps that many NGOs are trying to bridge (Interview #18). At the same time, something that may be described as an operational problem of the Directive and the legislation, is the bureaucracy that the Cyprus Law Office and the services involved have to face before, after and during the trial.

According to the interviewee from the Social Welfare Services, the current national victim support services has some weaknesses such as the failure of the legislation to determine which is the department responsible for the different cases, the fact that many parts of the Directive have not been fully ratified, the fact that there are not enough resources, mechanisms and an agreed framework for the rehabilitation of victims in order to meet the victims' needs on a practical level, coordination issues and the complacency of the competent services while there are victims who do not know they are included in the "victim" category and do not exercise their rights (Interview #02).

In fact, Article 10 (3) of the National Legislation states: "The competent authority for the coordination and supervision of all the services involved for the effective implementation of the provisions of this Article is the Social Welfare Services."

Some other weak parts of the current victim support services at national level include the fact that some officials ignore their obligations over the Directive and the diversity of each case (Interview #10).

According to interviewee # 04, although the Directive provides access to support mechanisms for all victims, only in cases of domestic violence or abuse the victims have direct access to psychological support.

Finally, interviewee #15 highlighted the existence of a gap on the issue of the protection of the victims' personal data, which, if not addressed, can lead to the stigmatization of the victims. Such problem is due to the small social context of Cypriot society.

Challenges

The main challenge that needs to be addressed in practice to achieve the objectives set out in the Directive is firstly the time-consuming procedures. The fact that many people are involved in a case may create difficulties in understanding and coordinating the case. The rapid increase of cases is a challenge that can be addressed through education and prevention of situations and the provision of information to potential victims in advance in order to avoid such incidents as well as mental trauma. Another challenge that needs to be addressed is the provision of a continuous education and training of all officials in all services and to improve communication between them. Training must start from an early stage (from school) and to a significant extent, through educational manuals or through training by the judges themselves or other experienced professionals.

A strong point of current victim support services is that there is a legislative framework and guidelines. Also a strong point is the existence of NGOs that fill the gaps left by public services. However, the main challenges that need to be met in practice to achieve the objectives set by the Directive are to respond promptly to all services, better controls and assessments, and the improvement of the cooperation between the Social Welfare Services and the Police (Interview #14).

The objectives set by the Directive according to interviewee #03 will be achieved if the proceedings were less time consuming, since there are cases pending for up to one year to be tried. Therefore, it is necessary to have more judges, qualified staff and a specific research in order to resolve the cases quickly. The recommendations for achieving the goals set by the Directive, according to the same interviewee, are the continuous training of the relevant bodies and officials. Special mention is also made of translators and interpreters whose qualifications should be examined periodically to avoid distortion of the cases when the victim's language of communication is different than national official language.

Recommendations for the effective implementation of the Directive

The new legislative framework in Cyprus allows both the public and the people who come into contact with victims, as well as the victims themselves, to believe that the situation is in a better position concerning the support and protection of victims.

Nevertheless, the reality concerning the victim support model is that it has not reached satisfactory levels; as many cases often remain unsolved for years due to the long delay in judging decisions. Indicatively, as the first interviewee (#01) highlighted, cases in 2015 are being judged in 2018. So, the first thing we have to do as a European state is to ensure that all services that come in contact with victims have sufficient, qualified and trained staff to handle the cases individually and to have an action plan designed so that no service delays the process (Interview #15).

We have also encountered this difficulty in the services offered by the Social Welfare Services Office as there is a great deal of work assigned to few officers. If the staff were sufficient, perhaps the procedure followed by the Welfare Office was faster and more functional. Indicatively, as interviewee #13 pointed out, in a case evaluated by the organisation where she is working, a human trafficking victim was waiting for the Social Welfare Services Office to respond for about 6-7 hours while the victim had no shelter to stay. Also, interviewee #09 considers that the lack of continuous support to victims and the bureaucratic nature of the procedures, does not allow victims to have the proper support needed.

The same could be said about the Cyprus Police. The understaffing of state agencies is obvious and here is where the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) comes in, nonetheless an NGO cannot replace the role of the Police and / or the Social Welfare Office. The interviewee #05 and #11 members of the Cyprus Police Force also perceive themselves the understaffing of their agency. Yet, at this stage, this problem has not been dealt with since the Police still receives too many cases per employee. Through the interviews (#05 and #11) one could also perceive the gap in time between reporting and the hearing, due largely to the Law Office's involuntary delay, caused by bureaucracy or/and understaffing.

The main challenges to overcome in practice in order to achieve the objectives set out in the Directive are to provide the competent bodies with the initiative to act immediately, to train the staff, the possibility of creating more reception areas for victims, staffing of competence agencies, the ability of competent officials to study and evaluate the Directive with a view to

implementing it (Interview # 10). The principal recommendation of the interviewee to achieve the objectives set out in the Directive is to inform the competent officials about their obligations. The Republic of Cyprus must provide the necessary resources to train specialised personnel through seminars or missions abroad so that they are ready to deal with each case.

Additionally, the interviewee #04, recommends the development of a basic hierarchy of continuing education, starting firstly from the professionals, the competent bodies, government agencies and police, followed by lawyers and psychologists who are the link between the state mechanism and the citizens, and, finally, to inform citizens and, in particular, potential victims of their rights. Also, it is important the staffing of competent bodies with more people with specialized knowledge on issues related to the support and handling of crime victims who have exclusive duties (Interview #15).

It is worth mentioning that in general, the professionals who come into contact with victims consider that, in order to achieve the objectives set by the directive, it is very important to staff victim support services, training professionals and upgrading services with people who have the necessary skills to deal with such cases (Interview #01, #04, #07, #08, #09 #10, #12, #13, #14, #15, #18). More victim support services for all types of crime, education, specialized training for professionals, development of clear guidelines for services, prevention and information of the public on communication, relationships, human rights and stereotypes need to be developed (Interview #15, #16, #17).

Also, what we need to take into account and address in practice in order to achieve the objectives set out in the directive is to protect the victims' personal data, to provide immediate and holistic services, to accelerate the procedures to avoid recurring victimization of the victims, addressing the issue of translation and interpretation at all stages of victim support. The interviewee's #15 recommendations are that communication and co-operation between departments should be improved, continuous training of professionals, staffing with specific people to deal with specific tasks as well as interdepartmental cooperation for all victims of crime (Interview # 15) . In another interview, the same issue was addressed, for which the professional believes that in order to achieve the goals set by the Directive, a change must be made to the culture and the society; citizens must be informed as it is a matter that concerns all of us, there must be continuous training for officials, for judges and even for the Media on how to handle a case as well as improving communication between services (Interview # 17).

Part of the main recommendations for achieving the objectives set out in the directive lie in the fact that the police authorities need to investigate and get court cases in a faster pace, social workers should check and evaluate thoroughly the cases of all victims, quality training for professionals so that they can, in turn, provide support services to the best possible degree, better coordination between services, and a quicker response to the victims. (Interview # 08).

A serious challenge that we must face in order to achieve the goals set by the directive is the marginalization faced by migrants. The interviewee argues that educating and informing all citizens of the importance of taking action will help to make a change, as well as better mutual help and cooperation among organizations is important (Interview #13).

But this is also evident at a professional level, since the psychologist is called upon to create a secure framework for support for victims, as well as every case needs to be re-examined. The training of police officers who are in the "front line" since they usually have the first contact with victims is very important. Appropriate preventive structures should be developed to prevent victimization and public information should be achieved (Interview # 06).

We can also take into consideration the points of view of the officers who come into direct contact with victims of crime. For example, interviewees #07 and #08, who come into contact mainly with minor victims of sexual abuse and / or exploitation, perceive inadequate training of the police officers. Although there is a group of police officers trained to interview minors, there is not a large number and certainly they cannot respond to the extensive number of cases of child sexual abuse.

Conclusions

To conclude our research, we can say with certainty that there is a comprehensive legislative framework that reflects the European Directive on the support of crime victims. What we observe is that, often, victim support processes are delayed and victims are repeatedly victimized through the whole process. We can safely say that there is a serious understaffing in government agencies and NGOs are called upon to fill the gap left by state mechanisms. Many times, however, the NGO's "power" does not allow them to act faster or more effectively to support victims of crime.

We can conclude from the interviews with professionals that the need of qualified staff occurs mainly at the Social Welfare Office, the Mental Health Services, the Police and the Law Office. Also, all interviewees, even if they are professionals who come in contact with victims, want and feel that they need themselves and the other bodies involved in a continuous education that will help them to provide support to the victims.

Therefore, the position of all victims is difficult since it is a psychological frustrating process. In the case of adult victims, the whole process is not victim-friendly, with the result that victims reach their limits. The criminal justice process is also frustrating for the victims as they relive their experiences and are subject to emotional insecurity and anxiety. The situation is much better for underage victims since all the services are housed under the "Children's House".

SupportVoC Interviewees list

#	ORGANISATION
#1	Supreme Court
#2	Social Welfare Services
#3	Law Office of the Republic of Cyprus
#4	Kakkouras and Panayides LLC Advocates Legal Consultants
#5	Cyprus Police Crime Combating Department
#6	Mental Health Services
#7	Children's House
#8	Children's House
#9	HFC Homes for Hope
#10	Bar Association of Famagusta
#11	Crime Investigation Department Cyprus Police
#12	Migrant Information Center (MIC)
#13	Migrant Information Center (MIC)
#14	Private Law Firm
#15	HFC Homes for Hope
#16	SPAVO
#17	SPAVO
#18	Cyprus Stop Trafficking
#19	Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Equal Opportunities between Men and Women
#20	Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Protection of Human Rights

Support Services in Cyprus

1	Cyprus Police	A brochure on the rights of victims of crime provided to victims when they arrive at the police station. They are also provided with a list of telephone numbers that may need (hospitals, welfare offices, educational psychology services, etc.)
2	Emergency Response Unit Cyprus Police	To provide help to the public in cases of calamity and/or other disasters.
3	Crime Combating Department	Its mission is the prevention and detection of crimes and especially the investigation of serious, complex crime cases that are not restricted to one district only and may extend abroad. In addition, the department co-operates closely with the Divisional Crime Investigation Departments, Crime Prevention Squads and other Departments of the Police.
4	Asylum Service, Ministry of Interior	Applications for International Protection At this stage, Kofinou Reception and Accommodation Center for only one Reception and Accommodation Center for Applicants for International Protection operates under the supervision of the Asylum Service. More specifically, the Reception and Accommodation Centre for Applicants for International Protection in Kofinou area, operates since 2004 and has the capacity to accommodate up to 400 persons (this centre was recently expanded with EU funding). The Asylum Service has also established, with EU funding, a temporary open reception centre for persons who are likely to need international protection in cases of mass influx (in the area of Kokkinotrimithia).
5	CARITAS Cyprus	- identify needs and assist people holistically including food provisions, clothing, medical support, educational support. - In Nicosia and Larnaca, Caritas Cyprus' Migrant Centres are open weekdays to provide a place for migrants to socialize with others, to access legal, healthcare, and psycho-social support, to learn languages and, if necessary, to access food, clothing and other humanitarian services. - In Nicosia,

		<p>Caritas Cyprus' Migrant Shelters provide temporary emergency accommodation to migrant men and migrant women with children. The Men's Shelter accommodates up to 12 men and the Women's Shelter accommodates up to nine women and four children depending on the composition of the family.</p>
6	Emergency number: 112	<p>112 is the common emergency telephone number that can be dialed free of charge from most mobile telephones and, in some countries, fixed telephones in order to reach emergency services (ambulance, fire and rescue, police).</p>
7	Cyprus Family Planning Association	<p>The Cyprus Family Planning Association (CFPA) runs a family planning clinic in Nicosia, providing a range of services, including HIV and AIDS testing. The facility draws on the help of a number of volunteer gynaecologists. Hundreds of young people provide peer group counselling, and also run a telephone helpline and workshops on sex education and sexuality awareness on a voluntary basis. The Member Association has been highly active in advocating changes to abortion law, and has played a central role in the drive to decriminalize homosexuality.</p>
8	Future Worlds Centre (Unit of Humanitarian Affairs, Torture Victims Rehabilitation Unit)	<p>Refugee Assisting Services, Legal Aid, Social Advice, Psychological Support Humanitarian Affairs Unit: Strengthening Asylum. This project's main objective is to ensure that beneficiaries have access to a fair and efficient asylum procedure, while they can enjoy the rights they are entitled to according to national, European, and International law. Unit for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture: aims to support and promote the empowerment and rehabilitation of torture victims and victims of trafficking who are asylum seekers or persons granted with international protection status in Cyprus and to assist them to integrate into the local society. Provision of Free Legal Assistance to Asylum Seekers is a project funded by the European Refugee Fund and the Republic of</p>

		Cyprus. This project compliments the additional projects run by Future Worlds Center's Humanitarian Affairs Unit. Improvement of the Situation of Asylum Seekers in Cyprus AIDA - Asylum Information Database aims to provide up-to date information on asylum practice in 16 EU Member States which is easily accessible to the media, researchers, legal practitioners and the general public.
9	MIHUB - Migrant Information Center	The Migrant Information Centre (MIC) has developed services based on our core values of listening, empathy, understanding and supporting individual vulnerable migrants. Their offices employ highly trained personnel ready to respond in a variety of requests. We work with individuals, families and community groups to identify their needs and provide information on a range of options available to them. We support them to access services and resources that meet their needs and build new skills to adjust harmonically to the Cypriot cultural and social environment.
10	'Hope For Children' CRC Policy Center	
11	Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights (Ombudsman)	National Preventive Mechanism Against Torture: operates within the Ombudsman Office's structures, since 2009, after the Cyprus ratification of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention for the Prevention of Torture. The Independent Mechanism acts both as a preventive body and as a control and monitoring authority for the operation of these places. During visits, detention, subsistence and living conditions are examined and suggestions are submitted. These suggestions aim at tackling structural rigidities and practices of arbitrariness. The competent authority must comply with the recommendations and provide answers/feedback about measures taken to achieve compliance. Since 2009, when the Independent Mechanism began its operation, several visits were made to the Central Prison, the Detention Centre in Mennogeia, the Psychiatric Hospital in Athalassa, to many police detention places, to private and state children's homes, as well as to homes for the elderly and

		<p>disabled. Following each visit, a Report was prepared that contained recommendations and suggestions for actions, inter alia, with regard to food, medical care, recruitment of qualified personnel, monitoring systems, use of violence etc. Independent Mechanism For The Promotion Of The Rights Of Person With Disabilities: The Independent Mechanism may examine matters relating to violations of the principle of equal treatment or human rights violations under the Convention, on its own initiative or upon receipt of individual or group complaints. The Independent Mechanism may, furthermore, conduct investigations of matters pertaining to the Convention, organize awareness-raising campaigns and promote the protection and entrenchment of the rights of PwD in general. National Human Rights Institution: The National Independent Human Rights Authority takes action every time the Commissioner observes violation or inadequate protection of human rights, or when it is deemed necessary to promote and cultivate in the wider society a culture of respect for the rights of vulnerable groups of population.</p>
12	External Gynecology and Obstetrics Clinic, Hospital Archbishop Makarios III	medical care
13	Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS)	Prevent and combat gender-based violence: MIGS Play It for Change is a new project under the European Commission's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme.
14	SPAVO Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family	<p>Helpline 1440 provides: – Counseling support for domestic violence issues concerning you or other people. – Information on other services related to domestic violence issues. – Information about your legal rights and choices in order to find the best possible solution for you.</p> <p>The European helpline 116 000 addresses exclusively cases of disappeared children. Our</p>

		<p>staff is trained to provide support to parents of missing children, to receive important information from citizens about a missing child and contact the related services. The service 116 000 operates under the consortium of Non Governmental Organizations, Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (SPAVO) and “Hope For Children” CRC Policy Centre (HFC). The Association provides psychological support and counseling to adults who are receiving or exercising domestic violence. These services are provided by psychologists and psychotherapist. The shelters were created to serve as a secure temporary hosting facility for women and their children whom are in a physical and emotional danger from people in their familial environment. The shelters serve as more than just a shelter of need. SPAVO organizes seminars and workshops in schools, universities, professional bodies and other social entities. Some of the subjects of our trainings are: Domestic violence/ neglect, recognizing the signs of violence, Sexual abuse, Communication skills, Anger management, creating healthy relationships (it applies to teenagers)</p>
15	Accept LGBT Cyprus	Provision of support to the LGBT community.
16	Red Cross	<p>- The Red Cross Children Therapy Centre – the centre is warmly embraced by the youth section by offering material as well as psychological and emotional support to the children. - Enclaved Children – Every Christmas and Easter the Youth Section sends presents to the enclaved Greek Cypriot[13] children that live in the north of Cyprus. - Psychological Support, Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers: In relation to humanitarian action for combating of issues affecting vulnerable groups and empowering them for their smooth social integration, the International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies (IFRC – www.ifrc.org) has proceeded to the creation of the Platform for European Red Cross Cooperation on refugee</p>

		issues, asylum seekers and migrants (PERCO - Platform for European Red Cross Cooperation on refugees, asylum seekers and migrants)
17	Social Welfare Services	<p>The Social Welfare Services Department is part of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance. The Social Welfare Services aim to safeguard social cohesion and social solidarity; to provide social protection, achieve social inclusion and promote equal opportunities for all citizens in the Republic of Cyprus; to combat poverty and social exclusion and to promote the interests of individuals, families and communities. In order to achieve the above-mentioned goals the Social Welfare Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Safeguard every individual's right to a decent standard of living; <input type="checkbox"/> Provide vocational training to public assistance beneficiaries in order to enter/reenter the labour market, thus achieving their social inclusion; <input type="checkbox"/> Provide support to the family unit so family members may effectively perform their role; <input type="checkbox"/> Support families and individuals who are facing social problems; <input type="checkbox"/> Provide protection and care to children and other vulnerable groups of people; <input type="checkbox"/> Sensitize non governmental organizations and local authorities to provide quality social services on the local level; <input type="checkbox"/> Upgrade the Services, provided by State Institutions and foster families to vulnerable groups of people.
18	Mental Health Services	Providing quality mental health care, in addition to treatment and rehabilitation, the areas of mental health and drug dependence prevention, as well as the field of mental health promotion and healthy interpersonal relationships.

Bibliography

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32012L0029>

DIRECTIVE 2012/29/EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32001F0220>

COUNCIL FRAMEWORK DECISION of 15 March 2001 on the standing of victims in criminal proceedings (2001/220/JHA)

https://e-justice.europa.eu/content_legal_professions-29-cy-en.do?member=1

Legal professions (Last updated 25/06/2013)

https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/cyprus_law_60_i_2014.pdf

60(I)/2014 A Law reviewing the Legal Framework for the Support, Prevention, Combating Trade and Trafficking of persons and protecting Victims.

http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/indexes/2014_1_91.html

The Prevention and Combating of Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation of Children and Children's Pornography Law (N. 91(I)/2014)

http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/upload/legislation/laws_2000_and_2004_en.pdf

The violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law of 2000 and 2004

http://www.moec.gov.cy/dme/programmata/scholiki_paravatikotita/entypa/oap/enimeroti_ko_oap.pdf

Appendices

http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:cfzuhft5_SwJ:fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2015-victims-crime-eu-support_summary_el.pdf+&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=cy accessed on the 15th of March

http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:FGLUbwI_zngJ:www.police.gov.cy/police/police.nsf/o/2A35ABB372300510C225796400284B8B/%24file/LEAFLET%2520EMBORIA_Layout%25201.pdf+&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=cy accessed on the 15th of March

<http://www.supremecourt.gov.cy/Judicial/SC.nsf/All/Co34727E25F13141C22578C70033C178?OpenDocument&print> accessed on the 15th of March

<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:WUQ-RXbKS68J:www.ombudsman.gov.cy/Ombudsman/Ombudsman.nsf/All/8608DF4FDC59C71C2257E7B002BD721/%24file/%25CE%2591-%25CE%25949.2014-01122014.doc%3FOpenElement+&cd=7&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=cy> accessed on the 16th of March

<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:kgs58odgOXoJ:www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/sid/sidv2.nsf/o/4BFC7BDAF6BED555C2257A01003D65C1/%24file/%25CE%25A7%25CE%2591%25CE%25A1%25CE%25A4%25CE%2597%25CE%25A3%2520%25CE%2594%25CE%2599%25CE%259A%25CE%2591%25CE%2599%25CE%25A9%25CE%259C%25CE%2591%25CE%25A4%25CE%25A9%25CE%259D%2520%25CE%25A4%25CE%259F%25CE%25A5%2520%25CE%25A0%25CE%259F%25CE%259B%25CE%2599%25CE%25A4%25CE%2597.pdf+%&cd=9&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=cy> accessed on the 16th of March

https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:x73Fg_mI_rQJ:https://euromedrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Factsheet-VAW-Cyprus-GREEK.pdf+%&cd=12&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=cy accessed on the 19th of March

http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:5I_uEBTgdJoJ:eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/mh0116746eln_web.pdf+%&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=cy accessed on the 19th of March

<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:WUQ-RXbKS68J:www.ombudsman.gov.cy/Ombudsman/Ombudsman.nsf/All/86o8DF4FDC59C71C2257E7B002BD721/%24file/%25CE%2591-%25CE%25949.2014-01122014.doc%3FOpenElement+%&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=cy> accessed on the 20th of March

<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:gskBmXOVar4J:www.mof.gov.cy/mof/gpo/gpo.nsf/All/D54E8892699CC9C2C2257F1100301BA8/%24file/4470%25204%252012%25202015%2520PARARTIMA%252040%2520MEROS%2520I.pdf+%&cd=6&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=cy> accessed on the 20th of March