



Council of the
European Union

**Brussels, 4 December 2023
(OR. en)**

16336/23

**CT 193
ENFOPOL 531
COTER 236
JAI 1613
COPEN 432**

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council

On: 4 December 2023

To: Delegations

No. prev. doc.: 15407/23

Subject: Council Conclusions on improving support and recognition of victims of terrorism

– *Council Conclusions (4 December 2023)*

Delegations will find in the annex the Council Conclusions on improving support and recognition of victims of terrorism, approved by the Council (Justice and Home Affairs) at its 3992nd meeting held on 4 December 2023.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS**on improving support and recognition of victims of terrorism**

STRESSING that terrorism remains a critical global threat, constitutes one of the most serious violations of the values of the European Union and endangers basic democratic principles such as respect for human rights, the rule of law and social cohesion.

BEARING IN MIND that the fight against terrorism must be approached not only from a security perspective, but also by focusing on the people directly affected, Member States must ensure a comprehensive response to the needs of victims of terrorism because meeting their needs is not only a moral responsibility but also a matter of compliance with legal obligations under international and EU law.

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the fact that the Victims' Rights Directive¹ establishes minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime and recognises that victims of terrorism need special attention, support and protection due to the particular nature of the crime; the proposed revision of the Victims' Rights Directive² that aims to further strengthen the rights of victims of crime in the EU, including the rights of victims of terrorism; the Counter-Terrorism Directive³ includes particular provisions dedicated to victims of terrorism and provides that Member States shall ensure that support services in addition to, or as an integrated part of, general victim support services addressing the specific needs of victims of terrorism are in place and that they are available immediately after a terrorist attack and for as long as necessary.

¹ Directive 2012/29/EU of the European parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (OJ L 315, 14.11.2012, p. 57).

² Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (11840/23).

³ Directive (EU) 2017/541 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 on combating terrorism (OJ L 88, 31.3.2017, p. 6).

NOTING that the Council, in its Conclusion on victims of terrorism adopted on 4 June 2018⁴, called on Member States to nominate a national contact point responsible for the provision of information concerning the available support, assistance, protection and compensation system for victims of terrorism in order to facilitate the rapid exchange of information and assistance in the event of a terrorist attack.

RECOGNISING the EU initiatives supporting and involving victims of terrorism, such as the EU Strategy on victims' rights (2020 – 2025) adopted in June 2020, which is applicable to all victims of all crimes paying a special attention to the most vulnerable victims and the Counter- terrorism Agenda, presented by the Commission in December 2020, which calls for strengthened support to victims of terrorism; the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) through which the Commission has been supporting victims of terrorism since 2011, especially within the dedicated Working Group on Victims of Terrorism (RAN VoT); the EU Victims' Rights Platform that foresees a more horizontal approach to victims' rights, including the rights of victims of terrorism, by bringing together for the first time all EU level actors relevant for victims' rights; and the EU Centre of Expertise for Victims of Terrorism (EU CVT) set up by the European Commission to offer expertise, guidance and support to national authorities and victim support organisations.

AKNOWLEDGING the success of the EU CVT in its pilot-project phase and the Commission's decision to continue with a new two-year stage with a possibility of extension for another two years.

BEING AWARE that not all Member States have suffered terrorist attacks on their territory or have residents who have been victims of terrorism in other countries and that they therefore reasonably do not have specific provisions in relation to victims of terrorism.

⁴ 9719/18.

EMPHASISING that the current terrorist phenomenon has a global and transnational dimension and requires all Member States to be prepared in case a terrorist attack occurs on their territory or affects their residents. Feasible and efficient solutions should be adopted to achieve consistent preparedness and response across the European Union.

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that the Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council based on article 29(2) of the Counterterrorism Directive⁵ concludes that despite the overall impact of the Directive there are deficiencies as regards the transposition of specific provisions for victims of terrorism, which could have the effect on cross-border victims of terrorism not receiving assistance or support tailored to their specific needs.

NOTING that not all Member States have designated a single contact point in accordance with the Council Conclusions on victims of terrorism.

ACKNOWLEDGING the establishment of the single contact points for victims of terrorism as a specific network within the European Network on Victims' Rights.

NOTING that, in addition to the need for Member States to have a designated single contact point which can facilitate access to assistance to victims of terrorism, best practices and recommendations for the cooperation and collaboration of the single contact points in the event of a terrorist attack resulting in cross-border victims should be set out in a non-binding operational protocol. The network of the single contact points (SCPVOT) has drafted a non-binding document entitled "Operational Protocol for the Network of single contact points for victims of terrorism"⁶ that, taking into account Member States' different national circumstances, can contribute to that those victims will receive assistance, support, protection and financial compensation in accordance with European legislation.

⁵ Report from the Commission to the European parliament and the Council based on Article 29(2) of Directive (EU) 2017/541 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 on combating terrorism and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA and amending Council Decision 2005/671/JHA (13478/1/21 REV 1 + ADD 1 + COR 1).

⁶ 14763/23.

HIGHLIGHTING that the political and overall societal component of terrorist attacks brings with it a need for recognition and remembrance of the victims of terrorism, which underpin the process of recovery of the victims as individuals and as members of the community, fostering social cohesion and the defense of democratic values. It is essential that Member States safeguard the memory of the victims of terrorism, both as an act of justice and as an instrument for the social delegitimisation of terrorism and violent extremism.

RECOGNISING the central role that the victims of terrorism should play in these remembrance policies, in particular their role in raising awareness of terrorist violence through their testimonies, as their voices are a powerful tool to raise awareness of the human consequences of terrorism and violent extremism.

UNDERLINING the contribution of civil society and victims' organisations in providing support to victims of terrorism, in drawing attention to the different issues they face and in remembrance policies and the delegitimisation of terrorism and violent extremism.

MEMBER STATES ARE CALLED ON TO

BE AWARE of the need to be prepared in the event of a terrorist attack and, consequently, to nominate a single point of contact for victims of terrorism to facilitate the exercise of cross-border victims' rights and contribute to effective cooperation between all Member States.

ENCOURAGE their national single contact point to promote themselves with the aim to be known by the authorities involved at national and international level and commit to keeping the list of contact points of the European Network on Victims' Rights up to date.

CONSIDER the implementation of the best practices and recommendations included in the "Operational protocol of the network of single contact points for victims of terrorism" while fully respecting Member States' national legislation and specificities.

ENCOURAGE the swift adoption of the targeted revision of the Victims' Rights Directive which aims to ensure that victims of crime, including victims of terrorism can fully benefit from their rights in the EU.

ENCOURAGE the adoption of measures to ensure recognition and respect for the victims of terrorism, by promoting training for professionals dealing with them, and drawing the media's attention to the treatment of victims and encouraging an approach in which the wishes and contributions of victims are properly reflected in commemorative events.

CONSIDER that the voices of the victims of terrorism and their testimonies raise awareness of the human consequences of terrorism and violent extremism and should therefore be considered in Member States' programmes and strategies to prevent violent radicalisation.

PROMOTE victims of terrorism remembrance policies according to the Member States' individual customs and practices, so that those who lost their lives or who have suffered physical or psychological injuries or had their freedom sacrificed as a consequence of terrorist fanaticism are not forgotten, those policies can also be used as an instrument to prevent violent radicalisation.

CONSIDER ways to ease the exchange of information on cross-border victims, in the best interest of the victims.

THE COMMISSION IS REQUESTED TO

ENCOURAGE cooperation between Member States, existing EU structures and civil society in order to provide efficient support to victims of terrorist attacks both in the direct aftermath and in the follow-up phase.

ENSURE the continuation of the functioning of the EU CVT and expanding its range of actions so that it can take a more practical approach to supporting Member States, especially the least prepared, when they suffer a terrorist attack, while facilitating new partnerships with international organisations and non-EU countries.

SUPPORT the functioning of the network of single points of contact for victims of terrorism under the European Network on Victims' Rights, in organising efficient, operative cooperation between the single contact points of the Member States.

PERPETUATE, in close cooperation with victims' associations, the organisation of the annual EU Remembrance Day for Victims of Terrorism as an act of both memory and resilience.

ENSURE that voices of victims and survivors of terrorism will be part of the activities developed in the framework of the EU Knowledge Hub on prevention of radicalisation to be launched in 2024.
