

# Special Advisor Recommends New Strategy for EU Victims' Rights

Thomas Wahl



## News

Victims still face many difficulties when accessing justice and compensation. The difficulties are often due to a lack of information, insufficient support, and overly restrictive eligibility criteria or procedural hurdles. For persons who become victims of crime when travelling to another EU country, it can be even more difficult to receive compensation. These statements have been included in the [report "Strengthening Victims' Rights: From Compensation to Reparation – For a new EU Victims' rights strategy 2020-2025."](#) The report was drafted by former Belgian Vice-Prime Minister *Joëlle Miquet*, who was appointed Special Advisor to the President of the European Commission *Jean-Claude Juncker* on compensation for victims of crime.

The report was presented on 11 March 2019 – the 15th Remembrance Day for Victims of Terrorism. It takes a holistic approach to compensation, i.e., it is not limited to the pecuniary aspects of compensation or the compensation procedure, but also tackles the reasons why victims have difficulties in claiming compensation.

The report first carries out a problem analysis, which is grouped into seven thematic chapters:

- Lack of/Access to information and to guidance;
- State compensation;
- Offender compensation;
- Procedural obstacles (length of procedures, complexity, costs);
- Cross-border and international victimisation;
- Free support services;
- Insurance.

The report also dedicates a chapter to the specific needs and problems of specific categories of victims, i.e., victims of terrorism, trafficking in human beings, and gender violence.

*Miquet* also takes stock of numerous best practices in terms of victims' rights and compensation at the national and EU levels. She points out that a future EU strategy on victims' rights should build on these achievements; however, best rules are only as good as their implementation and application in practice.

The Special Adviser calls on the EU to set up a new victims' rights strategy to tackle the identified problems in a holistic manner: first, immediate practical measures without changing EU legislation and, second, recommendations requiring legislative EU changes.

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The report advocates this strategy, which is composed of 41 detailed recommendations around six thematic blocks:

- Better cooperation;
- Training;
- Information;
- State compensation;
- Offender compensation;
- Support services.

In conclusion, *Miquet* calls for swift action in order to reaffirm and reinforce the EU and national commitments strengthening victims' rights. It is important "to show and prove to European citizens that they are living in a Humanistic Europe that protects, cares, repairs, connects, supports and offers a new beginning for everybody."

The Commission [will now assess](#) the recommendations and examine whether measures should be taken at the national and European levels to improve victims' access to justice and compensation.

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