

European Crime Prevention Award (ECPA)

Annex I

Approved by the EUCPN Management Board in 2018

Please complete the template in English in compliance with the ECPA criteria contained in the Rules and procedures for awarding and presenting the European Crime Prevention Award (Par.2 §3).

General information

1. Please specify your country.

Croatia

2. Is this your country's ECPA entry or an additional project?

Entry project

3. What is the title of the project?

CHAT for Victims – Changing the accessibility of tools for victims

4. Who is responsible for the project? Contact details.

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5. Start date of the project (dd/mm/yyyy)? Is the project still running (Yes/No)? If not, please provide the end date of the project.

1.7.2022.

Project is still running.

6. Where can we find more information about the project? Please provide links to the project's website or online reports or publications (preferably in English).

www.pzs.hr

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPeugoh1Q9D6A61xLLIJTVg/videos>

<https://podskazrtvamaisjedocima.wordpress.com/>

https://www.instagram.com/npc_116006/

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFOYTy3IS_E&t=178s

7. Please give a **one page** description of the project (**Max. 600 words**)

Victim and Witness Support Service Croatia (VWSSC) in partnership with The Official College of Psychology Madrid (COPM) from Spain, Legal center for the protection of human rights and the environment (PIC) from Slovenia, Victim Support Europe (VSE) from Belgium, Validity from Hungary and the Center for Legal Resources (CLR) from Romania implements the CHAT for Victims project. The project is financed by the European Commission as part of the Justice programme (JUST).

- Project duration: 24 months
- **General goal of the project:** Establishment of a higher level of assistance to victims and witnesses with disabilities. The service is provided online via live-chat service and in person via higher quality of communication competences of employees of institutions (police and judiciary).
- **Specific goals of the project:**
 - the establishment of a live-chat service adapted to persons with disabilities
 - conducting research with non-governmental organizations and persons with disabilities on providing support via live-chat service
 - creation of a manual with standards for providing support via live-chat service
 - creation and implementation of training to strengthen the capacity of experts to work with persons with disabilities via live-chat service
 - raising awareness of the existence of a live-chat support service for victims and witnesses
 - increase the level of knowledge about self-protective behaviour of people with disabilities
 - increasing the competence of police officers for communication with persons with disabilities
 - increasing the competence of judges and court employees for communication with victims and witnesses with disabilities.

The main goal of the project is the establishment of a functional live-chat service adapted to persons with disabilities, thereby expanding the range of formats

The methods that will be used in research are focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Each partner country will conduct at least two focus groups with PWDs in order to learn more about their needs and preferences in seeking support, as well as to gather their feedback upon the development of chat service. The focus groups are chosen in order to gather many opinions in a single encounter, as well as to encourage free communication among participants. Since PWDs are a target group for this project, all adjustments for successful communication are secured. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with the representatives of NGOs or institutions in Europe that have already implemented live chat service to learn about successful practices. Semi-structures interviews are chosen because the researchers already know which topics they want to address, but also, due to the lack of experience in providing support through live chat, want to leave space for participants to say what they deem important. Questionnaires for semi- structured interviews are made. Two training modules are developed and performed – one for trainers and one for support providers. Chat support will be provided by support providers working on the 116 006 helpline – National Call Centre for Victims of Crime. The National Call Centre for Victims of Crime was established in 2013 in cooperation with Victim and Witness Support Service Croatia, UNDP and the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration. National Call Centre for Victims of Crime is a national helpline with standardized number 116 006 intended for victims and witnesses of crimes and misdemeanours and family members. Victims and witnesses as well as potential victims with disabilities can receive emotional support, technical, legal and practical information and they can be referred to institutions or associations, regardless of the proceeding. Support via the 116 006 helpline, from the opening in 2013 until today, was provided by phone 24/7, but with the introduction of chat service, the support system for victims and witnesses will be enriched. Since the opening of the 116 006 helpline until today, more than 13 400 calls have been received and volunteers participating in the work of the Center and providing support have volunteered more than 43 000 hours. The second part of the project refers to the education of police officers and court employees in order to establish easier and more open communication with victims and witnesses as well as potential victims with disabilities in order to avoid primary and secondary victimization. Also, the goal is for them to understand and accept the disability of victims and witnesses through adoption of additional skills and to encourage them in their legal battle. The above is achieved through online lectures and live workshops, which includes a final evaluation of the level of knowledge.

I. The project shall focus on prevention and/or reduction of everyday crime and fear of crime within the theme.

8. Which **crime prevention/ reduction mechanisms** were used in this project to contribute to crime prevention and/or the reduction of crime or the fear of crime? Multiple answers are possible.

Establishing and maintaining normative barriers to committing criminal acts

e.g. 'Offenders, we are watching you' campaigns

Reducing recruitment to criminal social environments and activities by eliminating or reducing the social and individual causes and processes that lead to criminality

e.g. social and financial support for disadvantaged families

Deterring potential perpetrators from committing crimes through the threat of punishment

e.g. decreasing the time between arrest and punishment

Disrupting criminal acts by stopping them before they are carried out

e.g. increasing police patrols in vulnerable areas

Protecting vulnerable targets by reducing opportunities and make it more demanding to carry out criminal acts

e.g. placing locks and cameras

Reducing the harmful consequences of criminal acts

e.g. initiatives to recover stolen goods

Reducing the rewards from criminal acts

e.g. restorative justice programmes

Incapacitating (or neutralising) perpetrators by denying them the ability (capacity) to carry out new criminal acts

e.g. imprisonment of key gang members

Encouraging desistance from crime and rehabilitating former offenders so they are able to settle back into a normal life

e.g. prison rehabilitation programs

Explain how this/these crime prevention mechanisms were used ((**Max. 300 words**))

According to the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with disabilities 2021- 2030. PWDs experience violence more often (17% compared to 8% of people without). However, their access to information and much needed support is often weighed down by limited accessibility. Therefore, they are less likely to report a crime and if they do report, to be informed on their rights and exercise them during the procedure or to receive support suited to their needs. This makes them especially vulnerable to secondary victimization. Establishing a live chat service will mean that emotional and psychological support, information regarding victim's rights and other legal and

practical information will be easily available to more people than before, and to everyone in the same manner. Aside from mentioned populations, we expect young people who experience or witness a crime to welcome a live chat service since they are already used to seeking information, help through the Internet, and may prefer it to live contact. Persons who live in remote areas may also benefit from live chat service because the availability of victim support services is not as good everywhere. Short term effect of this project is raising awareness of victim support services existence, especially for PWDs, as well as establishing a new mean of providing support, therefore making victim support more accessible. Long term effect of the project will be improved access to information and support for all potential victims and victims, especially PWDs. This will make them more informed and better prepared to participate in criminal procedures that will, hopefully, mean an increase in the number of reported crimes. A higher level of knowledge of police officers will improve communication and enable faster interventions and data collection from PWDs.

II. The project shall have been evaluated and have achieved most or all of its objectives. For more information on evaluation, click [here](#)

9. What were the reasons for setting up the project? Was this context analysed before the project was initiated and in what way (How, and by whom? Which data were used?)? In what way did this analysis inform the set-up of the project? (**Max. 150 words**)

The activities of the project were built upon recommendations developed through Croatian Legal Center's (CLC) project "ARVID – A Better Approach to Victim's Rights for Persons With Disabilities". The project was conducted in Croatia and Slovenia, and the aim of the project was to investigate the level of participation of PWDs as victims and witnesses in criminal procedures and the problems they encounter. Based on the research they conducted, CLC developed seven recommendations for the improvement of access to victim's rights for PWDs. By developing live chat service adjusted to the needs of PWDs, the project would improve the fourth point - the problem of the lack of information PWDs have regarding their rights in criminal procedures. Through chatting with educated support providers, PWDs would be provided with all relevant legal information regarding their rights, financial compensation, criminal procedure or else, emotional support, practical information and contacts of other organizations and institutions. During 2018 and 2019, a survey was carried out on the quality of police and judicial services in communication with citizens and special categories of citizens. During this research it was found that the police officers have low quality of communication skills in communication with PWDs.

10. What were the objective(s) of the project? Please, if applicable, distinguish between main and secondary objectives. (**Max. 150 words**)

Main objective is focused on victims and witnesses with disabilities, and primarily – persons with speech, hearing and intellectual disabilities, are chosen as a target group due to their specific vulnerability in being unable to access regular means of support available to victims and witnesses. Although the project is aimed to PWDs, activities and results of this project will be beneficial to other groups of victims, especially victims of gender based violence and support providers who will participate in the trainings. Creating a chat-based support would provide additional way for a group of people in need to receive support. It would improve and broaden the system of victim support services, as well as increase awareness and contribute to the very relevant topic of changing attitudes and behaviour in regard to the issue of PWDs.

11. Has there been a process evaluation?¹ Who conducted the evaluation (internally or externally?) and what were the main results? Which indicators were used to measure the process? Did you make changes accordingly? (**max. 300 words**)

The final official process evaluation has not been done since the project is ongoing. But during the implementation of the project, all indicators (number of calls, content of calls (criminal offence or misdemeanour), number of educations conducted, number of participants in educations, monitoring of costs, implementation of project activities in certain time frames) are taken into account in order to fulfil the project's goals. Evaluation of the process is carried out according to the scheduled plan, per week and on a monthly basis. From the beginning of the project, project indicators and their fulfilment are monitored by the project manager. The project is ongoing and it hasn't needed any modifications yet.

¹ **Process evaluation:** Also called *implementation evaluation*, or *monitoring*, this process documents **how the activities were implemented** in order to determine any deviations from the original planning. It facilitates finding explanations for when the results of the intervention are not as expected.

12. Has there been an outcome² or impact³ evaluation? Who conducted the evaluation (internally or externally?), which data and evaluation method were used and what were the main results? Which indicators were used to measure the impact? (**Max. 300 words**)

The outcome and impact evaluation are planned but it has not been done since the project is ongoing. During the implementation of project activities, all indicators are taken into account in order to fulfil the project's goals. Outcome evaluation indicators are: evaluation of feedback on the quality of service of the target group divided by categories of disability and criminal acts or misdemeanours, evaluation of satisfaction with the quality of service providers' work (volunteers, police and judiciary) using anonymous questionnaire, number of recommendations given by the target group to other users of the service and the number of victims within the target group. Impact evaluation indicators will be measured over a period of 1, 2 and 3 years and they are: increasing or decreasing the number of victims within the target group, satisfaction of service users with the quality of information by long term evaluation form, the frequency of the number of calls made to service providers including the police and measurement of citizens' awareness of the rights of the wider population depending on the quality of the media campaign and repeated testing of the knowledge of police officers. From the beginning of the project, a trial version of the chat has been available on the website in order to see how users react/whether there is interest and on what needs to be paid attention to when creating a chat. In less than 3 months, over 100 inquiries were received through the temporary version of the chat, which shows Outcome impact evaluation will be completed after the project is ended. The EU survey on justice, rights and values will be sent to all participants in the activities that will be carried out as a part of the project in order to collect the feedback of the participants to the events. In this way, an additional evaluation will be achieved through an independent certified evaluator.

III. The project shall, as far as possible, be innovative, involving new methods or new approaches.

² **Outcome evaluation:** Measures the **direct effect** (i.e., extent of the changes) **of the intervention on the target group, population, or geographic area**. The information produced by the outcome evaluation determines at what level the **objectives were achieved**.

³ **Impact evaluation:** Measures **long-term effects** of the intervention on the target group, as well as **indirect effects** on the broader community. The information produced by the impact evaluation determines at what level the **ultimate goals** of the intervention were achieved.

13. How is the project innovative in its methods and/or approaches? (**Max. 150 words**)

Most organizations work either by live contact in their offices or through telephone line which is why, when no adjustments are made, persons with speech and hearing disabilities, people with physical disabilities and those with intellectual disabilities are often not able to get the information and support they need and, therefore, are not able to efficiently exercise rights that belong to them. In the Strategy for the Rights on PWDs 2021-2030 it is recognized that PWDs often encounter practical and legal barriers that hinder them from defending their rights as victims in criminal proceedings. Project is innovative due to the introduction of a chat service that will be the first of its kind in Republic of Croatia for victims of crime. Online materials are adapted for people with disabilities.

IV. The project shall be based on cooperation between partners, where possible.

14. Which partners or stakeholders were involved in the project and what was their involvement? (**Max. 200 words**)

Victim and Witness Support Service Croatia (VWSSC) is managing the project with partners:

1. Ministry of Justice and Public Administration of Republic of Croatia
2. Ombudsman for persons with disabilities
3. Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Croatia
4. The Official College of Psychology of Madrid
5. PIC – Legal centre for the protection of human rights and the environment
6. Victim Support Europe (VSE)
7. Validity
8. Centre for Legal resources
9. Local Crime Prevention Councils (224)

Each of these organizations are contributing in its field of activity, which will ensure a multidisciplinary approach to this topic. VSE is preparing research methodology and tools. Every partner organization will be conducting research with the note that partner organization Validity would focus in research on persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities. Partner organization VSE will also conduct workshop with participants of Centre of excellence – organizations that provide distant support and organizations that manage 116 006 helpline on how to establish and how to make live chat service accessible. Every partner will be participating in training for trainers and training for support providers. Interested partners will participate in the testing phase of live chat service and each partner organization will provide support via live chat service. Ministries organize training and education of their officials and participate in data

collection. LCPC are conducting a campaign to educate and motivate citizens to participate in the project.

V. The project shall be capable of replication in other Member States.

15. How and by whom is the project funded? (**Max. 150 words**)

The project is financed by the European Commission as a part of the Justice programme (JUST) and the Republic of Croatia through the human resources, working hours of the employees participating in the activities.

16. What were the costs of the project in terms of finances, material and human resources? (**Max. 150 words**)

399,802.29 EUR

17. Has a cost-benefit analysis⁴ been carried out? If so, describe the analysis, including how and by whom it was carried out and list the main findings of the analysis. (**Max. 150 words**)

The project is still running so the final cost-benefit analysis has not yet been done but it is planned. Evaluation of the project is planned after its completion. It is planned that the independent experienced expert and evaluator Dunja Bonacci Skenderović will carry out the evaluation of the project. The evaluator has experience in analyzing, monitoring and evaluating projects on EU level.

18. Are there adjustments to be made to the project to ensure a successful replication in another Member State?

One of the outcomes of the project will be a handbook that will define standards on how to provide support to victims through live chat service with recommendations on how to adapt the service to PWDs with gender perspective taken into account. A handbook will be made and translated in English and other languages spoken in partner organizations. Also, a handbook will be made, translated and disseminated for all interested parties to use in the developing of their own live chat services. This will hopefully mean that more countries will implement live chat and recognize it as a tool to reach previously unreachable populations and provide them with the service they offer. Handbook 'Providing

⁴ **Cost-benefit analysis:** A type of economic evaluation that compares the direct and indirect cost of the resources employed in the intervention, with the equivalent economic value of the benefits.

distant support – live chat service” will set standards in using chat service for victim support in EU. A YouTube video was created with instructions for communication with people with disabilities, which has English subtitles. Evaluation materials and other project documents are going to be translated into English.

19. How is the project relevant for other Member States? Please explain the European dimension of your project.

Though the victim support service number is relatively standardised across the EU member states, the services provided somewhat vary. The experience of building a safe and stable communication tool available 24/7 and setting standards on how to properly offer assistance and support in chat form will be valuable to organisations who decide to similarly expand their services. The project's added value at European level is represented in sharing and mutual learning with our partners from Slovenia, Romania, Spain, Hungary and Belgium, as well as producing documents that will be available for adaptation and use in other countries. Both the kick off meeting and all further team meetings will involve extensive partner consultations, exchange of experiences and learning from each other. The meetings will include organized visits to institutions and NGOs to get familiar with victim support system in partner's countries. A handbook for professionals will be made and translated in English and other languages spoken in partner organizations. The handbook will define standards on how to provide support to victims through live chat service with recommendations on how to adapt the service to PWDs with gender perspective taken into account. This way country planning to establish a live chat support service will have a valuable starting point.

Also, in the Strategy for the Rights on PWDs 2021– 2030 it is recognized that PWDs often encounter practical and legal barriers that hinder them from defending their rights as victims in criminal proceedings. In line with EU directive 2019/882 on accessibility requirements for products and services, the problem that would be addressed through the project would also tend to PWDs right to access of services. As the EU, and all of the member states, are also committed to implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of PWDs, which in its article 9 calls for ensuring PWDs access to information and communication, including electronic services and emergency services to facilitate independent living and full participation in society, this project would help in the implementation of the goals stated. Keeping in mind the rise in domestic violence that many countries reported during COVID-19 pandemic and the difficulties people with disabilities in normal circumstances experience in accessing information and support, European Disability Forum's European Human Rights Report on impact of COVID-19 on PWDs stated that PWDs, due to the lack of adjustments made by support services during the pandemic, dealt with inaccessible helplines, inaccessible reporting mechanisms and an overall inaccessibility of support services, including shelters. However, currently in Europe

only three national victim support services provide a chat option– Finland, Estonia and the Netherlands, with only two additional ones having an option of text messaging instead of calling. Furthermore, currently there are no standards for providing support to victims over chat, meaning there is a need for setting standards across the EU. Live chat would, firstly, enable PWDs to receive the help and support that, according to 2012/29/EU Directive, 2019/882 EU directive and UN CRPD, they are guaranteed, but currently cannot realize.

Please provide a short general description of the project (abstract for inclusion in the conference booklet – **max. 150 words**).

Victim and Witness Support Service Croatia in partnership with The Official College of Psychology Madrid from Spain, Legal center for the protection of human rights and the environment from Slovenia, Victim Support Europe from Belgium, Validity from Hungary and the Center for Legal Resources from Romania implements the CHAT for Victims project. The main goal of the project is establishment of functional live-chat service adapted to persons with disabilities, thereby expanding the range of formats through which victims and witnesses can receive information and support. Given that the provision of support via live-chat service is relatively new, the project's intention is to ensure a high quality of service through research, cooperation with governmental and non-governmental organizations that already provide support via chat and through cooperation with people with disabilities. All conducted efforts will be documented through the manual and the training programme as standards for future endeavours by other organizations or institutions.