



National Report on Legal Aid for Victims of Crime

As a key research effort under its initiative *Improving Protection of Victim's Rights: Access to Legal Aid*, supported by the European Commission and carried out in a consortium of universities and organisations from 4 EU Member States, the Center for the Study of Democracy (CSD) launched its national report on the legal framework and practices in providing legal aid to victims. The report explores whether those harmed by crime receive sufficient information about their legal situation, who is entitled to legal aid and what its scope and extent is. The document also relates the opinions of various institutional, private and NGO stakeholders, approached by CSD researchers, on the situation of victims, as regards their access to legal aid and advice.

The report concludes that, currently, much effort is taken in striving to provide adequate legal aid to victims of crime as part of the overall process to enhance their position. This is witnessed by the recent amendments in the Law on Legal Aid, expanding considerably the circle of victims, eligible to receive state-provided legal aid, the efforts of the National Legal Aid Bureau to improve the qualification of attorneys involved, as well as the recent launch of the much awaited initiative for a national hotline for primary legal aid and pilot consulting centres in Sliven and Vidin.

Nevertheless, the document recommends that:

- a full review is to be made of the compliance of Bulgarian legislation with the recent EU legislation, related to rights of victims of crime;
- the experience gathered by the newly launched national hotline and pilot consulting centres is to be analysed carefully and replicated via other consulting centres especially in vulnerable regions;
- the National Legal Aid Bureau is to use all channels to expand its knowledge base for working with victims, including further cooperation with bar councils and victim protection NGOs.

The full text of the report can be consulted <http://www.csd.bg/artShow.php?id=16847>. For more information and subscription to the initiative's e-newsletter, please contact the Center for the Study of Democracy at law@online.bg.



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