

**VICS**

IMPROVING PROTECTION OF  
VICTIMS' RIGHTS:  
ACCESS TO LEGAL AID



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IN POZNAŃ



Poznań, 9<sup>th</sup> of July 2014

*Dear Sir/Madame,*

taking into consideration fact that the work has been completed on the project „**Improving protection of victims' rights: access to legal aid**” I am kindly sending basic information concerning our latest undertakings within the project.

On 9<sup>th</sup> of June 2014 the International Conference „**Improving protection of victims' rights: access to legal aid**” took place. The Conference was held at facilities of the Faculty of Law and Administration of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and was a final activity of the project „*Improving protection of victims' rights: access to legal aid*”, co - financed by European Commission, which addresses the priority “Supporting victims of crime (VICS)”. Partners of the project were: *Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (Poland) - the Leader, Sabiedriskas Politicas Centrs PROVIDUS (Latvia), Center for the Study of Democracy (Bulgaria) and Consorzio Interuniversitario per la Formazione (Italy).*

The Conference brought together European experts on victims' rights – prominent scholars and practitioners delivering necessary help, protection and assistance to victims of crime. The main goal of the Conference was to consider the European Legal Aid System, and legal aid system in Members States, i.a. in Bulgaria, England and Wales, Italy, Latvia, Poland and Spain. The Conference served also as an international discussion platform for the challenges and recommendations of the legal aid system in Europe.

Firstly, participants were welcomed and introduced by Prof. Paweł Wiliński, the Scientific Coordinator of the project. Further on, JM Rector Prof. Jacek Witkoś and Prof. Roman Budzinowski – the Dean of Faculty of Law and Administration welcomed participants and stressed out the importance of undertakings such as this project. In the first part of the conference, Deputy Minister of Justice – Stanisław Chmielewski, also underlined crucial meaning of helping victims and he emphasized the challenges of this process. Then, Marta Kolendowska-Matejczuk, Ph.D., from the Office of the Human Rights Defence took the floor, giving the perspective of one of the most important bodies called to take necessary measures to create the system of legal aid in Poland.

During the second part, chaired by Małgorzata Wąsek- Wiaderek, Hab. Ph. D, from the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin in Poland, representatives of the partners of the project – Piotr Karlik, Ph.D., from *Adam Mickiewicz University (Poland)*, Sanite Sile from *PROVIDUS (Latvia)*, Miriana Ilcheva from *Center for the Study of Democracy (Bulgaria)*, Karen Hough from *Consorzio Interuniversitario per la Formazione (Italy)*, project coordinator Graciela Fuentes, Ph.D. (*AMU*) and scientific

coordinator Prof. Paweł Wiliński (*AMU*) took the floor. Each one of them, exposed the most crucial issues arising in their own country, connected with helping victims of crime. Partners also presented the structure of the legal aid given to victims in their countries. Moreover, Graciela Fuentes, Ph.D. emphasized the need to raise public awareness of victims legal rights. In addition, in this module prof. Paweł Wiliński revealed the recommendations for European Legal Aid System.

In the third part of the conference, chaired by Ph. D. Natalia Buchowska from Adam Mickiewicz University, challenges of the legal aid system for victims were exposed. Firstly, Sara Chrzanowska from the Procedural Criminal Law Unit Victims Team, DG Justice, European Commission explained the European Union legislation concerning the rights of victims. Challenges of the legal aid system for victims were also shown from British and Spanish perspectives by Prof. Louis Taylor from Nottingham Law School and Prof. Ágata María Sanz Hermida from La Universidad de Castilla-La Manch in Spain. During the third part of the conference, the *Directive 2012/29/EU Establishing Minimum Standards on the Rights, Support and Protection of Victims of Crime* were also talked over by Prof. Cezary Kulesza from Council for Victims. This part was devoted to legal aid challenges of the Member States and the harmonization of the national legal orders with the European Union norms.

The challenges and recommendations of the legal aid system in Europe were discussed in the next part of the Conference. The comments were given by Mikołaj Pietrzak - President of the Human Rights Commission from the Polish Bar Council, ECBA, Michał Lewoc from Ministry of Justice in Poland and Barbara Grabowska – the representative of Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights.



After the lunch break, the final part of the Conference took place. It was chaired by Agnese Lesinska. It focused on the indicators for the development of the legal aid system for victims. Vania Costa Ramos – the lawyer from Portugal presented the Portugal system of legal aid given to victims. Simone de Blasi – lawyer from Italy, focused on the communication as a vital tool for improving legal aid system. Next, Hristo Botev – attorney-at-law from the Sofia Bar Association from Bulgaria stressed out the education as an important indicator for the development of the help delivered. In the end, Diana Ziediņa – a mediator from Latvia focused on the importance of mediation in criminal procedure and advantages of using this tool in delivering help to victims.

In the end, the final comments and closing remarks were made by Ph. D. Marta Kolendowska – Matejczuk from the Office of the Human Rights Defender, Agnieszka Lisek - representative of the Polish Center for Mediation and Tomasz Piechowiak - President of Subvenia Victima.

The Conference not only brought together experts in victims’ rights – prominent scholars dealing with victims of crime and practitioners delivering necessary help, protection and assistance to victims of crime in their everyday practice but also judges, prosecutors, counsels, legal advisors and students from Adam Mickiewicz University.

With the encouragement and the engagement of partners as well as representatives of the European Commission, scholars and practitioners from different Member States the Conference could have been successfully held.





Please find more information concerning the VICS project (articles, general report, national reports and other information) on the website: <http://victimsrights.eu/>.

At the same time, I would like to thank you for your interest, support and involvement in the project. Your help was extremely significant for us and it reflects in the final results of the project. I hope our actions will help to initiate a broader discussion on the development of the system of legal aid in the European Union.

In addition, I also hope further cooperation in the future.

**Prof. UAM dr hab. Paweł Wiliński**  
Head of Chair of Criminal Procedure  
Coordinator of the project