

# Country report: Finland

## Status of crime victims and current practices

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# Background

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- Review of studies, reports, statements and media articles on the subject
- Final report of the best practices working group appointed by the Finnish Ministry of Justice (2018) "Crime victim in criminal procedure – a proposal concerning good practices for recognising the needs of victim"
- Representatives from the Criminal Policy Department of the Finnish Ministry of Justice, the Office of the Prosecutor General and the research department of the Police University College

# National legislation and practices

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- The legal status of crime victims **was already quite strong** in Finland before the Victims' Directive entered into force
  - the victim of a crime has the status of an injured party at a trial
  - has the right to legal counsel and a support person in the criminal justice process, and in certain cases also the cost is covered
- Victims' Directive introduced:
  - a wider obligation to notify the victim of their rights
  - a personal assessment of the victim's need for special protection
  - a Victim Surcharge
- Protection of the victim during court proceedings (video testimony and hearing is becoming more common)
- Right to interpretation
- **Special needs of underage victims** are also considered in legislation

# Common challenges from the victim's perspective

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- In practice, the victims do not receive all the information or a protection needs assessment in every case
- Reliable, qualified interpreters with no ties to the persons involved can be hard to find
- Fee for rejected restraining order applications
- Mediation in cases of intimate partner violence raises questions
  - **To summarize**, the victim's perspective is not understood

# Short look into best practices

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- MARAC Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference in cases of recurring or severe domestic violence
- Seri Support Centres for victims of sexual violence – 24h services from a single location
- Specialized services for children e.g. the LASTA model
- Using video in pre-investigation and in trial

# Final conclusions

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- Measures following the Victims' Directive have improved the status of crime victims in Finland – in practice there is still **work to be done**
- The **effects of the victim's trauma** on their behaviour and capabilities to take actively part in a process are not always understood
- Professionals in need to more **systematic training**, esp. prosecutors
- Best practices highlight the importance of a **multidisciplinary approach**

# Thank you!



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