

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

RECOMMENDATION No. R (87) 21

OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES

ON ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS AND THE PREVENTION OF VICTIMISATION

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 17 September 1987
at the 410th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that, despite the preventive measures taken by member states, a number of people are every day victims of offences against the person or against property ;

Considering that this victimisation often has serious physical, psychological, social and financial consequences ;

Considering that in many cases the intervention of the criminal justice system is not sufficient, alone, to make good the harm and disturbance occasioned by the offence ;

Considering the necessity to arrange for other forms of assistance to victims of criminal offences in order to meet their needs in the most appropriate way ;

Considering the substantial contribution made by private bodies in this field and the need to combine and to co-ordinate the efforts of public and private services ;

Having regard to Recommendation No. R (83) 7 on participation of the public in crime policy, Recommendation No. R (85) 4 on violence in the family, Recommendation No. R (85) 11 on the position of the victim in the framework of criminal law and procedure, the proceedings of the 16th Criminological Research Conference on Research on Victimisation and the European Convention on the Compensation of Victims of Violent Crimes,

Recommends that the governments of member states take the following measures :

1. ascertain, by victimisation surveys and other types of research, victims' needs and victimisation rates in order to gather the necessary data to assist in the development of victim assistance programmes and structures ;
2. raise the consciousness of the public in general and of public services regarding the needs of the victim, for example, by debates, round tables and publicity campaigns, and promote solidarity in the community and, in particular, in the victim's family and social environment ;
3. identify currently existing public and private services able to provide assistance to victims, their achievements and any deficiencies ;
4. ensure that victims and their families, especially those who are most vulnerable, receive in particular :
 - emergency help to meet immediate needs, including protection against retaliation by the offender ;

- continuing medical, psychological, social and material help ;
 - advice to prevent further victimisation ;
 - information on the victim's rights ;
 - assistance during the criminal process, with due respect to the defence ;
 - assistance in obtaining effective reparation of the damage from the offender, payments from insurance companies or any other agency and, when possible, compensation by the state ;
5. create, develop or extend support towards :
 - services designed to provide assistance to victims generally ;
 - services for special categories of victims such as children, and, when necessary, also victims of particular offences such as rape, domestic violence, organised crime, racist violence ;
 6. encourage voluntary aid, supported, as necessary, by professional help for training, specific services, administrative and technical support ;
 7. increase the contribution of general medical and social services, for example, by training their personnel to be alive to the victim's needs ;
 8. inform the public, by adequate means, of assistance services available and facilitate access by victims to these services ; facilitate the referral of victims by the police to victim assistance services and also direct approach to victims by such services to the extent compatible with the protection of the victims' privacy ;
 9. take steps to prevent victim assistance services from disclosing personal information regarding victims, without their consent, to third parties ;
 10. promote the co-ordination :
 - a. of victim assistance services operating on a public and private basis ;
 - b. of victim assistance services with agencies of the criminal justice system and other public services ;
 11. support the establishment, if necessary, of national organisations which advance the interests of victims ;
 12. make every effort to prevent crime, and hence victimisation, both through a policy of social development and through appropriate situational prevention measures ;
 13. provide the public and the victims themselves with specific information and advice to prevent victimisation or any further victimisation, whilst refraining from unduly exacerbating feelings of fear and insecurity ;
 14. develop special policies to ascertain particularly vulnerable groups and prevent their victimisation ;
 15. promote programmes of concerted action between neighbours for the prevention of victimisation and encourage groups with specific victimisation risks to take appropriate prevention measures in collaboration with local agencies and the police ;
 16. evaluate the extent of insurance cover by public or private insurance schemes as regards the various relevant categories of criminal victimisation and seek ways to make insurance more effective in relation to the needs of victims, if necessary ;
 17. encourage experiments (whether on a national or local basis) in mediation between the offender and his victim and evaluate the results with particular reference to how far the interests of the victim are served ;
 18. monitor and evaluate through research provisions for victim assistance by public and private services ;
 19. evaluate the effectiveness of programmes aimed at preventing victimisation of the population as a whole or of certain social groups.