



European Commission

Strasbourg, 12 September 2012

Putting Victims first: Commission welcomes European Parliament vote to improve rights for 75 million crime victims

European Commission Vice-President Viviane Reding, the EU's Justice Commissioner, today welcomed a vote by the European Parliament to back a new law improving rights for crime victims across the EU. The European Parliament voted in a first reading with an overwhelming majority (611 for, 9 against and 13 abstentions) to support the Commission's proposal for a directive setting out minimum rights for victims, wherever they are in the EU (see IP/11/585).

The plenary vote paves the way for a formal adoption by the Council in October so that the Directive can become law.

Speaking in Strasbourg today, Vice-President Reding said:

"Every year, an estimated 15% of Europeans or 75 million people in the European Union fall victim to a crime. They may be assaulted, robbed, or caught up in a terrorist attack."

"This new law will ensure victims of crime are not forgotten. The Directive will set minimum Europe-wide standards so that victims can be confident of getting help and support whether they are at home or on holiday, in Rome, London or Berlin.

"It is an historic achievement and a strong signal that Europe is delivering on the rights of citizens. Although we may never be able to reverse victims' suffering or restore what they have lost, we can reduce their frustration after a crime. Our goal should be to put victims first. They deserve nothing less."

"I would like to thank the European Parliament for its strong and very vocal support for the Commission's proposal, and in particular the rapporteurs Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio and Antonia Parvanova."

Background

The Directive on minimum standards for victims was tabled by the Commission in May 2011 (IP/11/585 and MEMO/11/310). Today's plenary vote in the European Parliament follows an endorsement by the Parliament's Committees on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (MEMO/12/541). This came after the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers reached an agreement in June following intense negotiations mediated by the European Commission. The draft law will now pass to the Council of Ministers for final adoption, expected within the next three weeks. Member States will then have two years to implement the directive's provisions into their national laws.

The proposed Directive on minimum standards for victims will ensure that, in all 27 EU countries:

- victims are treated with respect and police, prosecutors and judges are trained to properly deal with them;
- victims get information on their rights and their case in a way they understand;
- victim support exists in every Member State;
- victims can participate in proceedings if they want and are helped to attend the trial;
- vulnerable victims are identified – such as children, victims of rape, or those with disabilities – and are properly protected;
- victims are protected while police investigate the crime and during court proceedings.