BULGARIAN MULTIDISCIPLINARY COOPERATION SYSTEM

This Multidisciplinary Cooperation System was developed by KERA foundation within the project ”Linking Information for Adaptive and Accessible Child-Friendly Courts” co-funded by the European Union (LINK- 101097047- CERV-2022-DAPHNE) and the Foundation of Applied Disability Research (LINKS - Apa2024_058). The project aims to improve the accessibility of and integration of child protection systems in criminal proceedings for children with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities.[1]

Author(s)

Aneta Genova, Tsvetelina Marinova[2]

Publication date

April 2025

Project title

LINK: Linking Information for Adaptive and Accessible Child-Friendly Courts

LINKS: Multidisciplinary Assessment and Determination of Procedural Accommodations for Child Victims with Intellectual or Psychosocial Disabilities

KERA contacts

E-mail: kera.foundation@gmail.com

Postal address: Blvd. Hristo Botev 2, second floor, ap.213, Veliko Tarnovo, 5000, Bulgaria

Project contacts (Validity Foundation – Mental Disability Advocacy Centre)

E-mail: validity@validity.ngo

Postal address: 1365 Budapest, Pf. 693, Hungary

---

[1] More information about the project is available here: https://validity.ngo/projects-2/linking-information-for-adaptive-and-accessible-child-friendly-courts/

[2] In its most part this document elaborates on cointent from the LINK Model Multidisciplinary Cooperation Model, the authors of which are: Il Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Victim Support Europe, Terre des Hommes Hungary, Validity Foundation.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the international and local partners, organisations and institutions for their collaboration and contribution for the creation of the concept of the present Multidisciplinary Cooperation System and the adaptation of this concept to the Bulgarian context.

Co-funded by the FIRAH. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the Foundation for Applied Disability Research. The Foundation for Applied Disability Research cannot be held responsible for them.

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Glossary

Augmentative and Alternative Communication – A set of communication methods used to supplement or replace speech or writing for individuals with impairments in spoken or written language. This includes gestures, sign language, picture boards, and electronic communication devices.

Case Management System – A digital system used to manage, store, and provide access to case-related data. In the context of Diana, it ensures the secure handling of case information for legal and administrative purposes.

EU Victims' Rights Directive – A European Union directive that establishes minimum rights and standards for victims of crime across EU member states. It ensures that victims receive appropriate support, protection, and access to justice.

General Data Protection Regulation – A comprehensive data protection law enacted by the European Union to regulate the collection, processing, and storage of personal data. It grants individuals greater control over their personal information and imposes strict compliance requirements on organisations handling such data.

Multidisciplinary Team – A collaborative team of professionals from different fields, such as legal, medical, psychological, and social services, who work together to address complex cases. MDTs are commonly used in cases involving vulnerable individuals, such as victims of crime or persons with disabilities.

Secure File Transfer Protocol – A secure method for transferring files over a network, using encryption to protect data during transmission. It is commonly used for safely exchanging sensitive documents, such as legal or case-related files.

Definitions, Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACRONYMS / ABBREVIATIONS	DESCRIPTION
CABs	Child Advisory Boards
DIS	Digital Information System
CC	Criminal Code
CPC	Criminal Procedural Code
UCIS	Unified Court Information System (UCIS)
IEJP	The Integrated e-Justice Portal

Introduction

This report is an output of the LINK Project (Linking Information for Adaptive and Child-Friendly Courts), which aims to provide guidelines and suggestions for the implementation of a digital case management system (the Model Multidisciplinary Cooperation System) to allow for victim-centred individual assessments and multi-stakeholder cooperation among institutional and non-institutional actors, with the final goal of ensuring access to justice for children having intellectual or psycho-social disabilities.

The proposed blueprint of the Digital Information System for victim's assistance is an innovative and ambitious project. This system has been envisioned as a multi-function, multi-role application for victim data collection, procedural accommodation definition, risk assessment, data management, expert system information through an AI chatbot, and for the provision of a secure chat for operators.

The construction and implementation of this system in Bulgaria poses several challenges including changes in the Bulgarian criminal legislation, training of all criminal justice professionals to adjust their functions using technologies; conducting a campaign and trainings how technologies can provide effective procedural accommodations to users from vulnerable groups (children, children with disabilities, young girls etc) and risk assessment to prevent further crimes or revictimisation. On technology side, it is very important to ensure interoperability between the existing electronic systems in the criminal justice operators in Bulgaria and the child protection services in order to provide support and information to victims.

01

PART 1
INDIVIDUAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND PROCEDURAL ACCOMMODATIONS FOR CHILD VICTIMS WITH INTELLECTUAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL DISABILITIES IN BULGARIA

1.1 Individual assessment

The EU Victims' Rights Directive introduced the obligation to conduct the individual needs assessment for all victims of crime, by virtue of Article 22. The aim of Article 22 is twofold: to ensure that the tendency to only focus on specific needs of only specific groups of victims is overcome and to support the requirement that specific special measures for protection are put in place.

The outcome of the implementation of this provision are equally twofold. The primary goal is to achieve a criminal procedure that is better catering to victims and, therefore, reduces the negative consequences of the crime to the victim. Coincidentally and consequently, victims who feel safe and protected and are not exposed to further victimisation due to their reporting of a crime, will be able to give better evidence, better participate in criminal proceedings, and achieving justice.

The Directive requires the individual needs assessment to be established for every victim of every crime. However, to respond to the needs of children with disabilities, the system needs to be able to identify the specific needs of children and ensure the introduction of protective measures for every child that needs them.

It is critical to understand key aspects of Article 22 as interpreted in the light of the entirety of the Directive. These aspects relate to:

1) The notion of criminal proceedings and when an individual assessment should be carried out.
2) The definition of victim and when an individual's rights as a victim can be claimed or are enforceable.

With regards to the notion of criminal proceedings in Bulgaria and when (at what stage of the proceedings) an individual assessment should be carried out, it should be outlined that there are only few cases of children with disabilities victims of crimes that reach the justice system in Bulgaria. Only one to three cases per year[3] are reported by investigating police officers, prosecutors, or judges. Cases of non-verbal children with disabilities are even rarer or completely absent. The research on national level serving as basis for those reports did not find a single case of a child using augmentative and

[3] From an interview with a male judge at the District Court conducted under project "LINKING INFORMATION FOR ADAPTIVE AND ACCESSIBLE CHILD-FRIENDLY COURTS"- see report at https://www.kerafoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/BULGARIAN-NBPs-EN-Final.pdf.

alternative communication methods having had proceedings in the criminal justice system of Bulgaria[4]. Most of the cases reported to the authorities concern cases of children victims of crimes, and in rare instances, these included children with disabilities.

How do experts explain this lack of cases? - several possible barriers were outlined:

a) Barriers to report the crime;
b) Lack of specialised experts;
c) Lack of understanding among professionals about what the individual assessment should be;
d) Lack of a clear definition and recognition of a victim;

These barriers are addressed shortly below:

a) Problems with reporting the crime.

Limited access to justice is often the result of barriers that children with disabilities face in the reporting process. Those barriers can be categorised into three groups: normative, factual, and related to a lack of understanding of violence as such.[5] In addition, there are emotional barriers such as fear of the perpetrator.[6] Despite the legally provided measures for the protection of witnesses and victims, judges shared that those are not sufficient, and fear of the perpetrator is one of the main obstacles preventing victims from reporting crimes, regardless of whether the victim is a child with or without disabilities.

In Bulgaria, cases of children that reach the criminal justice system are initiated by parents or close relatives of the victims who notice signs of violence or from educational staff.[7] It is important to establish secure ways for reporting crimes to ensure access to justice, especially for children with communication disabilities and /or

[4]See "LINKING INFORMATION FOR ADAPTIVE AND ACCESSIBLE CHILD-FRIENDLY COURTS" report at https://www.kerafoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/BULGARIAN-NBPs-EN-Final.pdf

[5] Interviews with judges conducted under project "LINKING INFORMATION FOR ADAPTIVE AND ACCESSIBLE CHILD-FRIENDLY COURTS"- see report at https://www.kerafoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/BULGARIAN-NBPs-EN-Final.pdf.

[6] Interview with a male judge conducted under project "LINKING INFORMATION FOR ADAPTIVE AND ACCESSIBLE CHILD-FRIENDLY COURTS"- see report at https://www.kerafoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/BULGARIAN-NBPs-EN-Final.pdf.

[7] The particular case concerns sexual violence in residential care. The information is based on an interview with a male district judge conducted under project "LINKING INFORMATION FOR ADAPTIVE AND ACCESSIBLE CHILD-FRIENDLY COURTS"- see report at https://www.kerafoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/BULGARIAN-NBPs-EN-Final.pdf.

children placed in residential care. Without specific and accessible communication tools for them, and in absence of a trusted adult, it is difficult, if not impossible, for them to access justice.[8]

The DIS, proposed in Part 2, as a first step to make justice systems more accessible, would allow the user of the system (i.e. the child victim) to choose and engage a facilitator to support him or her. See the role of this facilitator in b) below.

The system would provide explanations on what constitutes violence, what constitutes a crime, and how to identify them. It might contain not only text explanations, but also video examples of violent acts and how to recognise them. This information would be supplemented with explanations on what are reasonable accommodations and which of those are available to the user. Furthermore, the system would have a section that would list in accessible manner what are the rights of a person who was victim of violence and/or a crime.

The system would offer an accessible way for any user (adult and/or child with/without disabilities) a quick and secure way for sharing the violence suffered, i.e. to report the violence. It would be possible to raise a complaint about an act of violence in 3 different ways: 1) with the help of a facilitator - this facilitator could be a psychologist/social worker/child specialist, picked by the user from a list/menu offered by the system; 2) by using reasonable accommodations offered by the system suitable to the user according to his or her access needs (for example, if the user has a reading disability, he or she would be offered an easy-to read version on how to make a complaint); 3) autonomously by the user, when he or she does not need support in the process, for example when the complaint is raised by the parent of a child. The system should allow the complaint to be deposited by the victim him/herself or by a trusted adult. The system would then direct the complaint to a single unit that includes police, prosecution, social services / child protection services. In Bulgaria, currently the so called Coordination mechanism is activated when the crime concerns a child. For further details on this mechanism, see section 6. ¨Step 2 – in-depth assessment of the child¨ below.

[8] The report "Dis-Connected: Interconnected Services and Programs for Preventing Violence Against Women and Children Targeting People with Disabilities" examines this issue in more detail. The report focuses on access to justice for women and children with disabilities who are victims of gender-based violence. The report is available here: https://www.kerafoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/DIS-CONNECTED-Bulgarian-National-Briefing-Paper-BG.pdf

b) Lack of specialised experts.

According to a judge[9], one of the reasons for lacking access to justice is the formal nature of the criminal proceedings, which does not recognise children with disabilities as a specific group with specific needs related to access to justice.

The lack of specialised experts who can assist in communication and contact with children with disabilities such as speech therapists, psychologists, and others, was outlined as issue. These experts should be available to the police, court and other institutions within the criminal justice system. Although courts in Bulgaria have lists of experts - psychologists, psychiatrists, etc., those are not specialised in communication and working with children with disabilities. Moreover, such experts are usually appointed only to assess the victim and the damages suffered due to the crime for the purposes of supporting the judge's decision on the right punishment to the perpetrator. Such experts are not available to provide support to the victim at the beginning when reporting the crime. They cannot be called by the victim.

The DIS, proposed in Part 2, would provide the user (adult and/or child with/without disabilities) from the very start (when first accessing the system) the option to call for a facilitator to support the user throughout the process. This facilitator could be a psychologist/speech therapist/social worker/child specialist, picked by the user from a list/menu offered by the system. The facilitator should be available to the user whenever he or she needs help regardless of when the official proceedings would be terminated and regardless of whether the violent act is officially classified as a crime. Furthermore, the facilitator should be given the power and the opportunity to support the victim in the official proceedings that follow as well as be available to judges, police and other investigative bodies to facilitate the communication between the user and the professionals involved. The facilitator would play a major role for the successful implementation of the individual assessment process and the adoption of procedural accommodations for the user. In order to introduce and empower the role of such a facilitator, legislative amendments would be needed (in the Criminal Procedural Code, in the Law on persons with disabilities etc.).

[9] See "LINKING INFORMATION FOR ADAPTIVE AND ACCESSIBLE CHILD-FRIENDLY COURTS" report at https://www.kerafoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/BULGARIAN-NBPs-EN-Final.pdf

c) Lack of understanding about individual assessments among professionals.

Regarding the individual assessment of the victim in practice, in Bulgaria there is a lack of a uniform and an unambiguous understanding of the individual assessment on the part of the professionals involved in the criminal justice system, including judges, prosecutors, police officers and social workers.

There is a confusion regarding the concept of "individual assessment". There are several legislative acts that provide for such an assessment. The Social Services Act, for example, provides for preparation of an individual needs assessments of persons with disabilities, and the procedure and content of these assessments are regulated in the Implementing Regulation of the Social Services Act.[10] The Child Protection Act also provides for the preparation of an assessment, specifically regulated by the Implementing Regulation of the Social Assistance Act.[11] With regard to the individual assessment under the Law on Assistance and Financial Compensation for Victims of Crime, such detailed specification is still lacking, therefore, by analogy, the judicial authorities resort to one of the above-mentioned assessments.[12]

It is highly recommended that a unified concept and structure of "individual assessment" be implemented and used by all professionals involved. Once this is done, the DIS, proposed in Part 2, could easily present to the user what such an assessment constitutes, its purpose and how it can support the user in his or her legal proceedings.

d) Lack of a clear definition and recognition of a victim.

According to the Bulgarian legal system, only the Criminal Code (CC)[13] determines which act shall qualify as a crime. Crimes are investigated and court proceedings in criminal cases are governed by the rules of the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC).[14] The CPC also regulates specific rules for interviewing underage witnesses, as victims usually have the status of witnesses in the trial.

[10] See Article 1(3) of the Implementing Regulations of the Social Services Act. Even more specifically, these issues are developed in the Methodology for Determining Individual Needs, approved by the Executive Director of the ASA and available at: https://asp.government.bg/bg/deynosti/sotsialni-uslugi/metodiki-i-metodicheski-ukazaniya/

[11] See Art. 9 (1) et seq. of the Implementing Regulations of the Child Protection Act.

[12] The Law on Assistance and Financial Compensation for Victims of Crime is relatively new. Perhaps in the future the problem will be solved, either through a legislative initiative or through uniformity of practice.

[13] The Criminal Code is available at: https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/1589654529

[14] CPC in force since 29.04.2006, available at: https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135512224

Bulgarian criminal law uses the term "victim" to refer to victims of crime.[15] Pursuant to Article 74, paragraph 1 of the Criminal Procedure Code, "*A victim is a person who has suffered material or non-material damage as a result of a crime*". Every victim has a number of rights[16]: be informed of his/her rights within the criminal proceedings; obtain protection with regard to his/her personal safety and the safety of his/her relatives; be informed of the progress of the criminal proceedings; take part in the proceedings in accordance with the provisions of this Code; file requests, notes and objections; file appeals with regard to the acts resulting in the termination or suspension of criminal proceedings; have a counsel; be accompanied by a person designated by him/her; receive a translation of the resolution terminating or suspending the criminal proceedings if he/she does not have command of the Bulgarian language; request speeding up of pre-trial proceedings in the cases provided for in this Code. There are no specific rules that specify how this is done in cases where the victims are persons with disabilities - either children or adults - and how disability-related barriers shall be overcome for these rights to be implemented.

In court proceedings, the victim of the crime may participate as: a civil claimant in order to be awarded compensation for the damage suffered; a private prosecutor (having the same rights as the prosecutor in terms of collecting evidence and appealing the court's decision) where the crime is publicly prosecuted; or a private complainant where the crime is prosecuted on the complaint of the victim of the crime.[17]

The Criminal Procedure Code provides that where the victim, due to helpless state or dependency on the perpetrator of the crime, cannot defend his/her rights and lawful interests, the prosecutor may join the proceedings initiated[18] or directly institute criminal proceedings[19] of his/her own motion *ex officio* for crimes that are prosecuted on the grounds of a complaint by the victim. This rule should also apply in general to children, especially children who are deprived of parental care and children in residential care, and in general to persons with disabilities, including children who are dependent on the perpetrator. However, the legislation lacks sufficient guarantees that this will happen. These provisions in the Code are currently more of a wishful thinking

[15] For more detailed information on the legal situation of persons with disabilities who are victims of crime under Bulgarian law, see the report *Voices for Justice: People with Disabilities in Bulgaria, victims of crime* available at https://nie.expert/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/National-finding-report-Bulgaria_bg-220421-1.pdf

[16] See Article 75(1) of the CPC

[17] See Articles. 75-88 of the CPC on the rules on how the victim could participate in the court proceedings as a private prosecutor, private complainant or civil claimant

[18] See Article 48 of the CPC

[19] See Article 49 of the CPC

than serving to overcome the specific barriers that prevent persons with disabilities, including children, from accessing justice when they are victims of violence. Furthermore, it should be noted that offences categorised as inflicting "trivial bodily injury" and "moderate bodily injury" to close relatives are prosecuted on the grounds of a complaint by the victim,[20] which explains why only extreme acts of violence are prosecuted where the victims are persons with disabilities, whether adults or children.[21]

In Bulgarian context, the legal definition of victim leads to misunderstandings and lack of support at the beginning of the procedure, when the need of such support is crucial. The problem originates from the Bulgarian criminal law, which allows recognition of a victim status at a later stage of the proceedings. However, as it is established already, support to victims of crimes, especially children and children with disabilities, is needed at a very early stage of each case. Without it the crime often cannot be reported nor even recognised as such.

The DIS, proposed in Part 2, would offer information, help and support as explained in a) above to the person who is accessing it, regardless of whether he or she is given the role of "victim" under the description of the national legislation.

In conclusion, there are several challenges stemming from the Bulgarian legislation and the actual execution of the criminal proceedings, mainly the confusion between the criminal justice professionals around the concept of "individual assessment" and the definition and recognition of an individual being a victim at a later stage of the criminal proceedings, while such recognition should happen at the very start (immediately after suffering the crime) as it triggers the support prescribed and offered to victims by the Bulgarian legislation.

[20] See Article 161 of the Criminal Code

[21] In this regard and in general about the many problems faced by persons with disabilities who are victims of crime, see the report of the Chance and Support Association "People with disabilities who are victims of crime", available in Bulgarian and English at: https://validity.ngo/projects-2/voices-for-justice/publications-and-resources/

We believe that these challenges could be overcome by constructing and adopting the Digital Information System (DIS), proposed in Part 2. As described in detail above, the system would be helpful for reporting a crime, as well as for the assessment of an act as a crime. It would provide summarised information on the user's rights and options, presented in a simple and clear way, suitable to children and families as well. It would offer real time support and services available for victims and would refer to the assistance of special facilitators to support the victim throughout the proceedings. The DIS would offer description/presentation in assessable form (easy to read and/or video) of the trial proceeding that follow after reporting the crime.

1.1.1 Timing of individual assessments and the notion of criminal proceedings

According to the EU Victims' Rights Directive, victims should receive a timely individual assessment to determine specific protection needs and to determine whether and to what extent they would benefit from special measures in the course of criminal proceedings.

The obligation to conduct individual needs assessment starts when the criminal complaint is introduced to the competent authority of a Member State – which usually means in the first instance, it is the police that will conduct the initial assessment. However, subsequently, this needs assessment should be kept updated and relevant, to ensure that any changes in the victim's personal circumstances are registered and appropriately addressed through the assessment.

An individual assessment should take place:

1) in a timely manner,

2) at the earliest opportunity after the submission of a complaint of a crime, such that

3) the victim's exposure to secondary and repeated victimisation, to intimidation and to retaliation is minimised and that

4) there is maximum likelihood that victims who need them receive special measures in time to avoid or mitigate harm.

The Directive identifies some groups of victims who should be given special attention by the authorities, due to different factors, including victims with disabilities, while also recognising the vulnerability of child victims – consequently implying that children with disabilities need to be particularly paid attention to in criminal proceedings. In addition, other circumstances can lead to specific vulnerabilities of victims, such as for example, the child being a victim of sexual violence or human trafficking.

In Bulgaria, the Law on Assistance and Financial Compensation for Victims of Crime[22] was adopted to transpose the Victims' Rights Directive. It imposes an obligation on the authorities of the Ministry of Interior, investigators and victim support organisations to immediately notify victims and their family members of: their options for accessing medical care, the organisations they can turn to for free psychological help and support, and any specialised assistance they can receive; their right to legal aid, the authorities to which they can turn to exercise that right, and the conditions and procedures for providing free legal aid; the authorities to whom a report of the offence may be made, the procedures following the reporting and the options available to victims under the terms and conditions of those procedures; the authorities to which a report may be made in the event of a violation of their rights by the competent authority acting in the framework of criminal proceedings; their rights in the criminal proceedings and the possibilities for their participation therein; the authorities they may turn to get protection for themselves and their relatives, and the conditions and procedures for obtaining such protection; the authorities they may turn to to get financial compensation from the State, the conditions and procedures for obtaining such compensation.[23]

The supervising prosecutor is responsible for ensuring that the investigating authorities fulfil these obligations.[24] With the recent amendments to this Law a new provision[25] was adopted, pursuant to which victims of crime are entitled to an individual assessment. The purpose of the individual assessment is to determine their physical and mental condition as a result of the crime committed and to identify any possible specific protection needs.[26] According to the same provision, it must be presumed that

[22] In force since 22.12.2006, last amended: 6.10.2023. Available at: https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135540550

[23] A brief analysis of the law from the perspective of child victims of crime is included in an article published by the National Network for Children, available at: https://nmd.bg/pobedi-li-kauzata-na-nmd-za-sthadyastho-pravosadie-za-deczata-zhertvi-na-prestapleniya/. The article points to the fact that child victims of crime have been singled out as a separate category of victims, as well as the fuller transposition of Directive 2012/29/EU, as successes. On the negative side is the fact that the Ministry of the Interior is tasked with all assessment work, with no provision for assessments to be carried out by organisations that have made initial contact with the child victim, and the lack of explicit guidance on referral to psychological support.

[24] See Article 6 of the Law on Assistance and Financial Compensation for Victims of Crime

[25] See Article 7a of the Law on Assistance and Financial Compensation for Victims of Crime, effective as of 1 September 2023.

[26] Within the meaning of §1, paragraph 4 of the supplementary provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code, "Specific protection needs" exist when it is necessary to apply additional means of protection against secondary and repeated victimisation, intimidation and retaliation, emotional or psychological suffering, including the preservation of the dignity of victims during interrogation.

special protection needs exist always where the victim is a child or a person with disabilities. In this case, an extended individual assessment[27] shall be carried where the authorities of the Ministry of Interior or the investigators shall, without undue delay, form a team involving representatives of the Directorate for Social Assistance and the local authorities.[28] As a result of the information gathered, the team members shall decide on the protection measures to be taken in respect of the child.[29] The individual assessment shall take into account: the type and nature of the offence and the circumstances surrounding it; the type and extent of the harm suffered; the age, intellectual development, emotional and social maturity and education of the victim, as well as other personal characteristics of the victim[30]. This assessment shall be carried out by the authorities of the Ministry of Interior or investigators who made the initial contact with the victim, without undue delay, on the basis of a conversation with the person. They may, at their discretion, request assistance from a psychologist, doctor or other relevant professional.[31] If new circumstances arise which may have a significant impact on the victim's personality, the individual assessment shall be updated. Where the victim is a child, the authority or organisation carrying out the assessment shall immediately inform the Child Protection Department at the Directorate for Social Assistance at the child's current or permanent address.[32]

Following the adoption of the latest amendments to the Act, the obligation to notify has been extended to include the individual assessment. These amendments have also introduced the requirement of an age-, disability- and condition-sensitive approach to the notification of victims.[33] Although the provision is relatively concise, it still requires that notification be made "*in a clear and understandable manner, verbally or in writing on a standard form, in a language that persons [...] understand.*"[34]

This provision is the first of its kind to introduce the requirement to take into account the age and condition of the victim when informing them of their rights.

Regarding the practice of conducting the individual assessment as it was said above, the concept of the individual assessment is understood differently by professionals.

[27] See Article 7c (5) of the Law on Assistance and Financial Compensation for Victims of Crime
[28] See Article 7d (1) of the Law on Assistance and Financial Compensation for Victims of Crime
[29] See Article 7d (5) of the Law on Assistance and Financial Compensation for Victims of Crime
[30] See Article 7b of the Law on Assistance and Financial Compensation for Victims of Crime
[31] See Article 7c (1) of the Law on Assistance and Financial Compensation for Victims of Crime
[32] See Article 7c (2) of the Law on Assistance and Financial Compensation for Victims of Crime
[33] See Article 6a of the Law on Assistance and Financial Compensation for Victims of Crime.
[34] See Article 6a (2) of the Law on Assistance and Financial Compensation for Victims of Crime. The law does not detail what is to be understood by "in a clear and comprehensible manner" and "in a language that persons understand".

Moreover, often it does not serve the purpose of providing reasonable and procedural accommodations for children who are victims of crimes. This is very well demonstrated in the words of a district judge:

„Usually, when cases come to us, the individual assessment has already been made during the pre-trial proceedings phase [...] It's a standardised document that outlines the child's social status, family situation, what kind of family they come from... those sorts of things. The law allows for the assessment to be modified, but I haven't had to do that." "It used to be called a social report. Now, social reports are used in civil cases. This assessment is something similar. We consider it from the perspective of assessing to what extent the procedural rights of the child would be violated if the parents participate, if they are deprived of parental rights, if there are problems in the family, if the child has any specific needs. [...] As far as I know from my colleagues in the investigation units, it is prepared by the child protection departments, and a large part of the information is kept by them... [...] We mainly consider them from a procedural point of view, determining which individuals should participate and in what capacity".[35]

In Bulgaria, the individual assessments under the Law on Assistance and Financial Compensation for Victims of Crimes do not hold particular significance in criminal proceedings before the court. How exactly the individual assessment should be prepared appears unclear to professionals. For some judges, the preparation of the assessment should be based on information provided by individuals who know the person to extract information about their character and particularities. According to the judge, this information would guarantee the possibility of providing suitable conditions for participation in the legal process. How exactly a person with disabilities is involved in preparing this assessment, whether their consent is obtained for its preparation or acceptance, remains an unclear issue that is not even problematised - the person with disabilities seems excluded from the process of preparing the assessment.

Regarding the investigating police officers, it is very clear that the issue of the individual assessment is still not well defined, and debates and uncertainties remain about how to prepare it and who is responsible for it. Often, the investigating police officers have difficulty understanding the need for this assessment.

[35] An interview with a male judge at the District Court conducted under project "LINKING INFORMATION FOR ADAPTIVE AND ACCESSIBLE CHILD-FRIENDLY COURTS"- see report at https://www.kerafoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/BULGARIAN-NBPs-EN-Final.pdf

The misunderstanding of the purpose and significance of the assessment seems to stem from a lack of understanding of the necessity to adapt procedures during investigation and judicial processes in a way that makes them accessible to the victims. The criminal process in Bulgaria itself, in all its phases, is highly formal and focused on establishing facts and punishing the perpetrator, while the condition of the victims, their meaningful participation, understanding of procedures, and access to rights and rehabilitation, whether they are children or adults, whether they have disabilities or not, remain in the background. Moreover, there appears to be a lack of understanding regarding the content of the assessment and the experts who are supposed to conduct it. The need for communication specialists, special techniques, or technologies to support the participation of the victims is still very much underestimated.

In this context, the proposed DIS has great potential to clarify the concept of the individual assessment, how and who should conduct it at first, what information should be included and how it would be kept updated throughout the whole proceedings. This system would clearly identify the roles of the professionals involved and would define their activities in these roles. Furthermore, the system would provide access to those professionals to enable them to update and be updated about the new facts of a case. This would enhance and facilitate the collaboration among all the professionals involved. Thus, the appropriate procedural accommodations would be more easily seen, outlined, and offered.

1.1.2 Identifying risks, vulnerabilities and barriers

Article 22 of the EU Victims' Rights Directive sets out three areas that indicate potential vulnerabilities:

1) personal circumstances of the victim;
2) type and nature of the crime; and
3) circumstances of the crime.

While children with disabilities are seen as vulnerable by virtue of the Directive, it is important to identify the detail of their vulnerabilities, in order to understand their needs and to respond to them appropriately. For example, if a victim follows a specific schedule of treatment or therapy – it may be important to adjust the examination timing and duration to their availability.

Similar can be said in relation to the type and nature of the crime. In this regard, the biggest issue is that the more violent and intense the crime, the higher is the level of trauma, and hence the victim is likely to struggle more in the proceedings.

Regarding circumstances of the crime, different elements need to be considered: was the crime committed in plain sight or in the intimacy of victim's home? Have the victim's pre-existing vulnerabilities been used against them to commit the crime? What was the motivation for the crime and how does it impact the victim?

In the majority of situations, there will be a multiplication of these different factors. Children with disabilities, children from poor backgrounds or other members of marginalised groups, for example, are more likely to be exposed to crime. In addition, knowing that children with disabilities are often more likely to be victimised by the persons they trust the most – e.g. their parents, carers or peers, this vulnerability needs to be specifically accounted for in the assessment.

Within this reality, even crime that is not particularly violent can have detrimental impact on the child and it will be important to protect them from adverse effects of being exposed to criminal proceedings.

When, for example, a child with disability is exposed to hate-crime committed by their peers – this may have consequences not only for the children involved, but also for their parents. If this happens in a small town, where everyone knows everyone, this may have impact on the entire community. If the perpetrator is (related to) a leader or a public figure, this may expose the vulnerable child further to public scrutiny and bring them into the spotlight and draw the attention of media. In such a way, the impact of exposing the crime may snowball and be blown out of proportion and fundamentally change the life of the victim and their entire family.

Evidently, with the multiplication of different factors, a victim's potential vulnerabilities also multiply, and can contribute to a higher risk for further victimisation. Therefore, a thorough, detailed, accurate and continuously updated individual needs assessment is fundamental to protect victims from all forms of negative consequences of participating in criminal proceedings.

In the context of the Bulgarian legislation, it is hard to point out provisions that clearly and uncontroversially impose the obligation upon the criminal justice authorities to take into account the above-described features of the assessment. Rather, it is up to the discretion of each authority or criminal judge whether to choose an approach that is consistent with the rights and the plight of the victim.

1.1.3 Workflow for assessing and addressing needs and barriers

As mentioned previously – the assessment should be done as early as possible following the criminal complaint. Usually, this will happen when the victim comes to the police to report a crime, and there are grounds for suspicion that the crime has indeed occurred. At this occasion, the police will normally take a statement from the victim and forward the complaint to the prosecutor. This should also be used as an opportunity to note down any specific indicators which may alert to vulnerabilities, as is already being done by the police.

In the Bulgarian context, children with disabilities rarely have access to justice if they are victims of crime. Often the information about the crime (or violence they went through) reaches adults in the child-care system, neighbours, doctors, etc., who are not experts in criminal proceedings and do not have knowledge how to address and recognise crime. In many cases, those people have doubts about what to do and sometimes they take it as their duty to get some more information about the violence before reporting it. Often trusting the authorities and the justice system when you need to report a crime is problematic. Therefore, it is highly recommended that the first step be focused on providing information about a wide range of potential experts and support organisations, about individuals' human rights and available procedural accommodations. The society should be widely educated about how and to whom to report to about crimes against children.

The Child Advisory Boards (CABs) held over the course of the LINK project suggested key measures to ensure that children feel safe, heard, and supported when interacting with the justice system. Their recommendations ware focused on creating a more accessible and less intimidating system for young individuals. Those recommendations focus on four main areas: environment, support, stress reduction, and education.

Creating a Suitable Environment

Children who need to engage with the legal system should not feel intimidated by hostile, formal settings. Instead, they should be welcomed into warm, friendly spaces designed to make them feel comfortable. The CABs suggest using soft colours, cosy furnishings, and ensuring that children's basic needs—such as access to food and water—are met.

Beyond the physical environment, the professionals working with children must be trained to communicate effectively and empathetically. Specialised training can help legal representatives build trust and ensure that children feel supported throughout the process. Whenever possible, interactions should take place in safe and private spaces rather than in formal courtrooms, which can feel overwhelming to young individuals.

Support and Preparation for Children

One of the most important aspects of creating a child-friendly justice system is ensuring that children are adequately prepared for their interactions with legal professionals. Every child should have the right to be accompanied by a trusted adult—someone they know and feel safe with.

Communication is another critical factor. Questions should be posed in a way that is age-appropriate and easy to understand. Additionally, children must be informed in advance about what to expect. Uncertainty and fear of the unknown can cause unnecessary stress, but proper preparation can significantly reduce these anxieties.

Reducing Stress and Anxiety

Navigating the legal system can be overwhelming, especially for children. The CABs emphasised the importance of reducing stress factors to create a more positive experience. Children should be familiarised with the legal process beforehand, so they understand their role, what is expected of them, and what rights they have.

A formal and intimidating atmosphere—such as harsh tones, unfamiliar faces, or dismissive attitudes—can increase anxiety. Institutions and professionals must ensure that children are treated with kindness and respect, making them feel valued and heard. Most importantly, children need reassurance that their voices matter and that their concerns will be taken seriously.

Educating Children on Their Rights

Empowering children with knowledge is one of the most effective ways to protect them. The CABs recommended integrating lessons about children's rights and legal protection into school curriculums. Through real-life case studies and interactive lessons, children can learn how to recognise risky situations and seek help when needed.

The Digital Information System (DIS), proposed in Part 2 of the present document has the purpose to introduce a Child-Friendly Justice System and takes into account the recommendations of the CABs. It aims at making the justice system more accessible and less daunting for children. The system offers a well-structured, child-friendly approach that ensures that young individuals feel safe, heard, and protected—leading to a more just and supportive society.

Step 1 – Identifying risks, vulnerabilities and barriers

The **first steps of individual assessment** should include in particular:

- identification of the child's age, gender and their disability;
    - NOTE: on account of worry or concern or shame about disability, the child or their parent/carer may choose not to disclose disability. The focus of the assessment should not be on diagnosing disability but identifying overall needs or barriers;
- *prima facie* communication needs (e.g. uses wheelchair, has difficulties verbalising etc.);
- identification of the primary support person, and if possible, names of experts that are known to the child and who might support the assessment process (e.g. psychologists, teachers, speech therapists, intermediaries and others whose opinion might be relevant for the process);
- other elements that might be of note for the assessment, that can be discovered without disruption and while conducting other investigative actions;

This initial assessment will need to be noted in the case-file in a way that ensures protection of the child, which requires that the details of the child's assessment should not be made available to the defence, and will be shared by other actors only on an as-needed basis.

Step 2 – In-depth assessment of the child

The second step is the in-depth assessment, where the specific needs of the child victim and barriers they might encounter, are identified, listed and support measures agreed upon with the purpose of preventing retaliation, intimidation, repeat and secondary victimisation, as well as provide procedural accommodations that will be needed in the foreseeable procedural steps. Depending on the circumstances of the child, this may involve cooperation of multiple professionals (especially criminal justice and child protection professionals).

With the proposed DIS depending on the complexity of the child's needs and barriers, and the procedural accommodations identified, a task force (TF) would be established through and/or the support of the digital system, with the primary objective to ensure that all relevant experts are involved in putting into place and successfully implementing procedural accommodations. As per International Principles and Guidelines on Access to Justice for Persons with Disabilities, this may involve designing and implementing a programme of independent intermediaries or facilitators in a manner consistent with local procedures and customs, and in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The following elements are relevant for the child's interaction with the criminal justice system and with the child's participation:

- child's existing support and care team and the possibility to include them in the process of identifying and responding to the needs, as a matter of preference; support may vary depending on whether there is a conflict of interests between carer and a child and on whether there is a (need for a) special representative involved;
- child's intellectual or psychosocial disability and how the traditional operation of the court might not be compatible with the child's impairment. This can include how understandable the questions are, the child's preferred means of communication, the need for information to be presented in a particular format (braille, easy to read documentation), as well as which questions the child can or cannot respond to, how to formulate questions when interrogating the child etc.;
- any sensory triggers and the need to adapt the physical environment to accommodate the child;

- accessibility needs in general, and communication needs in particular, including the support arrangements in response to those needs;
- family situation and related vulnerabilities (for example, are parents going through a contentious divorce which might affect custody issues and the potential procedural implications – e.g. need to change the address for correspondence, but also practical, such as the primary support person; substance abuse by family members and related risks and implications etc.);
- does the child live in an institution or group home and has support from staff or guardian inside – is there a conflict of interests between guardian and child;
- financial issues and their potential consequences;
- specific environmental needs/risks (e.g. living in rural area without easy access to transport, having been victimised by neighbours etc.);
- healthcare schedule, care arrangements and daily/weekly routine;
- any assistive technology used and the specific technical requirements in that regard, especially when the child uses alternative and augmentative communication;
- any gender specific needs (e.g. fear or different communication needs depending on the gender of the interlocutor – is it recommended to interact only or preferably with experts of a specific gender etc.);
- attending school, school schedule and if it’s inclusive or segregated school where relevant – question on school context and whether it is inclusive may give the criminal justice authority the environment and surroundings that the child is used to communicate with adults, level of education and other children without disability and what adjustments have worked in this context that can be used in court.

In 2010, in Bulgaria, a Coordination Mechanism for cooperation on cases of children who are victims or are at risk of violence and for cooperation during crisis intervention was set up and has been in operation since then.[36] Article 36 (d) of the Child Protection Act regulates interinstitutional cooperation and the formation of a multidisciplinary team to prepare an action plan for child protection or violence prevention. The action plan contains health, social and educational services for prevention of violence or recovery of the child. It also specifies the authority of social workers to notify the court or a prosecutor to take competent measures with regard to the perpetrator, among others. Therefore, most of the elements listed above are usually collected, analysed and prepared in a report by the child protection authorities and the report is forwarded to the criminal justice professionals. The Coordination Mechanism should apply to all children, regardless of disabilities. However, there are no specific provisions to ensure that when a child with a disability needs support from such a multidisciplinary body, age- and condition-appropriate measures will be applied.

Apart from the Coordination Mechanism, there is no provision in the Criminal Procedure Code that spells out how professionals from the justice system connect with those from the child protection sphere, how information is exchanged, what guarantees are in place that the child will be adequately heard and included in this process. In practice such coordination in Bulgaria is needs-based, namely, professionals from the justice sector liaise with those from the child protection sector to establish the child's situation and family history and environment. They have the right to request information and reports. This is the pathway to make contact and exchange information. There are no specific rules that can be referred to, and that address children with disabilities and their specific needs. In general, judges and prosecutors confirm that they work with the specialists from child protection departments by exchanging of information within a given case proceeding "*in the old-fashioned way*"[37] by sending letters and requests to carry out specific research on the case.

The Bulgarian legislation provides also for the so called ¨ police protection to children ¨, which is offered to children who are victims of crime, whose life and health are immediately threatened, who risk being involved in the commission of crime, or who

---

[36] On 15 March 2010, an Agreement for cooperation and coordination of the work of the territorial structures of the child protection authorities in cases of children who are victims of violence or are at risk of violence and during crisis intervention was signed between the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, the Minister of Interior, the Minister of Education, Youth and Science, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Culture, the Minister of Health, the Chairperson of the State Agency for Child Protection, the Executive Director of the Agency for Social Assistance, and the Chairman of the Managing Board of the National Association of the Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria.
[37] As per the words of a male district judge.

are lost or are in an otherwise helpless or unsupervised situation.[38] The measures that can be taken for the benefit of such children are: to remove the child from the environment or the persons having an harmful influence on him/her; to identify the circumstances that have led to the child being in this situation; and to take measures together with social workers from the Directorates for Social Assistance (DSA) to eliminate the causes and conditions posing a threat to the physical, mental or moral development of the child.[39] In this case too, the special needs of children with disabilities are not regulated specifically.

Step 3 – Ensuring continued updates to the individual assessment throughout the criminal proceedings

It is to be expected that following the initial police report, the case will be investigated and transferred from the police to the prosecution, and then eventually to the competent adjudicating body. This transition needs to contain not just the casefile, but also the victim's file.

Victim file as part of the case management system

It is important to ensure that the content of the individual needs assessment, including any details pertaining to the victim's vulnerabilities, their personal situation and any risks, is kept separately from the rest of the criminal file and accessed only on an as-needed basis.

The victim file should, as a default, not be made available to the defence and only elements that are relevant and strictly necessary to be shared with the defence will be disclosed to the defence or anyone else who does not have a justified need to have access to the file, under the threat of sanction.

Any case-management system must be built so as to enable strict control of who can have access to the file, punctual log of anyone accessing it, modifying or sharing the file, as well as strict compliance with any privacy and confidentiality requirements, but also in view of the best interest of the child.

[38] Ordinance No. I-51 of 12 March 2001 on the conditions and procedure for granting police protection to children. The document is available at: https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/-549175804. It was issued by the Ministry of the Interior. Its scope is specified in Article 3.
[39] See Article 4 of Ordinance No. I-51.

The case officer needs to be at the helm of coordination of the needs assessment, ensuring that the needs of the child victim are responded to timely and through appropriate intervention, at all stages of criminal proceedings. However, it may be possible that for procedural purposes, they can be formally reported to the prosecutor, judge or other official responsible for running a phase of proceedings.

Once criminal proceedings are finally concluded (regardless of the outcome of the case), the case-manager needs to compile a transition plan, which will include the necessity to provide follow-up with the victim, depending on the circumstances. In particular, should the case be concluded by an imposition of a custodial sentence for the offender, it may be necessary to plan for the time when the offender might be released, and the victim might need to be informed about this or other developments regarding the offender's impediment.

The Bulgarian Coordination Mechanism for Collaboration referred to above[40] is in practice a joint meeting between social workers from child protection departments, the investigating police officer handling the case, the prosecutor, and a representative from the municipality. These participants familiarise themselves with the specifics of the case, as well as the individual characteristics of the child (health condition, family situation, educational status, etc.), after which they collaboratively develop an action plan for the protection of the child. Once the plan is drafted and approved, each participant takes their "piece" and implements activities to carry it out. However, there is a lack of subsequent coordination between the participants, alignment, and update of information and activities carried out by each participant. There is no unified system (whether in electronic form or in the form of a written procedure) through which participants can inform each other, as well as receive timely and up-to-date information regarding the progress of the case and the implementation of the plan. Whether this will happen, largely depends on the personal qualities and commitment of the professionals. Upon specific request from the prosecutor or judge, social services provide up-to-date information about the child, considering their social status. It is not

[40] Regarding the goals and functions of the Coordination Mechanism for Collaboration in cases involving children who are victims of violence or at risk of violence, and for interaction during crisis intervention, see § 3.1.2 of project "LINKING INFORMATION FOR ADAPTIVE AND ACCESSIBLE CHILD-FRIENDLY COURTS"- see report at https://www.kerafoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/BULGARIAN-NBPs-EN-Final.pdf

clear who oversees the overall implementation of the plan beyond the individual responsibility of each participant for their "piece".[41]

The Multidisciplinary coordination system described in Part 2 of the present report aims to overcome this lack of coordination, update and cooperation between the stakeholders, i.a. by creating the victim´s digital file and defining who this file is shared with across the different procedural stages of a case.

1.1.4 Collaboration paths in a multi-stakeholder system

In the absence of already existing multi-agency collaborations, it is important to run a stakeholder analysis and build pathways to ensure cooperation with all relevant institutions, authorities, organisations and individual experts. This analysis needs to run in several phases, which should include:

- mapping – a step in which all relevant authorities, institutions, service providers and other relevant actors will be identified. Mapping should also aim to identify any gaps in the ability to respond to the needs of child victims and suggest solutions to overcome the gaps and barriers (e.g. if the child finds themselves in a region in the country where victim support services do not exist, there should be a protocol to ensure mobile services from other regions);
- categorising and cataloguing - understanding the roles that each of the stakeholders might play in responding to the needs of the child victim and building a catalogue of contacts that will be needed to build a multi-stakeholder database;
- building and maintaining communication and referral pathways - this can be done through memoranda of understanding, collaboration protocols or contractual arrangements. Such arrangements should, among other elements, ensure that different counterparts remain in regular contact with each other, regardless of any specific case, to ensure the flow of communication and good collaborative relationships between individuals.

[41] The information was gathered from interviews with police officers, prosecutors, and social workers under project “LINKING INFORMATION FOR ADAPTIVE AND ACCESSIBLE CHILD-FRIENDLY COURTS”- see report at https://www.kerafoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/BULGARIAN-NBPs-EN-Final.pdf.

Such an example is the Barnahus model that requires that children are provided support services, as well as be enabled to participate in criminal proceedings – by only coming to one location – the Barnahus premises. In this scenario, all experts or officials are coming to the child. This includes psychologists, medical professionals but also police, judges or prosecutors if needed.

To build effective and constructive collaboration between different agencies and other stakeholders, it is important to plan and build collaboration paths in advance. Some collaborations come more naturally than others, but it is important to work towards having a broad coalition of authorities, organisations and individual experts who can be involved in the needs assessment and identification and implementation of protection measures and procedural accommodations.

1.2. Setting procedural accommodations to adjust proceedings to child victims

The Victims' Rights Directive includes the following procedural accommodations:

- interviews with the victim being carried out in accessible premises designed or adapted for that purpose- if need to, this can be done in a victim's home;
- interviews with the victim being carried out by or through professionals trained for that purpose;
- all interviews with the victim being conducted by the same persons;
- all interviews with victims of sexual violence, gender-based violence or violence in close relationships, unless conducted by a prosecutor or a judge, being conducted by a person of the same sex as the victim, if the victim so wishes;
- measures to avoid visual contact between victims and offenders including during the giving of evidence, by appropriate means including the use of communication technology;
- measures to ensure that the victim may be heard in the courtroom without being present, in particular through the use of appropriate communication technology, such as video-link or videoconferencing systems;

- measures to avoid unnecessary questioning concerning the victim's private life not related to the criminal offence;
- measures allowing a hearing to take place without the presence of the public[42], as well as,
- in criminal investigations, all interviews with the child victim may be audio visually recorded and such recorded interviews may be used as evidence in criminal proceedings;
- in criminal investigations and proceedings, in accordance with the role of victims in the relevant criminal justice system, competent authorities appoint a special representative for child victims where, according to national law, the holders of parental responsibility, such as guardians, are precluded from representing the child victim as a result of a conflict of interest between them and the child victim, or where the child victim is unaccompanied or separated from the family; and where the child victim has the right to a lawyer, he or she has the right to legal advice and representation, in his or her own name, in proceedings where there is, or there could be, a conflict of interest between the child victim and the holders of parental responsibility[43].
- It is to be stressed that putting children in institutions is not a form of protective measure. In that respect the so- called “police protection to children” that includes the measure for a child to be removed from the environment or the persons having a harmful influence on him/her should be applied very carefully in order to avoid removing a child from its home and placing it in an institution. Placement of children should only be in a family-based home as the UN CRPD requires.

In Bulgaria, serious legislative amendment is needed to ensure that all these options (described above) are available to the child victim. Currently, the legislation has left it to the discretion of the judge what measures to take to ensure the rights of the child victim. Bulgarian justice, however, is more oriented towards punishing the perpetrator and far less towards restoring the victim and his/her access to rights and rehabilitation, protection from re-victimisation, etc. There is no link between the requirements of the Law on Assistance and Financial Compensation of Victims of Crime and the

[42] Victims’ Rights Directive, Article 23
[43] Victims’ Rights Directive, Article 24

assessment by the Ministry of Interior authorities and the judge's discretion on protection measures. The judge has broad discretion to accept or not accept this assessment, to require another, or to decide based on personal observations and beliefs that the victim does not need special protection.

Additionally, the connection and coordination between the Ministry of the Interior and the child protection authorities is not clear. From a technical point of view, the flow of information between different structures is also not sufficient. The Child Protection Departments do not have experts sufficiently trained to meet the high requirements of the law in terms of assessment. This imbalance between expertise and the workload of duties and responsibilities, over-confidence in the conclusions without making a judgement on the expertise of the person making the assessment (assuming that since he or she is a representative of the service he or she will be competent enough). In practice, this often leads to a neglect of children's rights in criminal proceedings and an underestimation of children's experience, and sometimes a complete denial.

1.2.1 Accessibility and procedural accommodations

The procedural accommodations offered to victims should be in line with the International Principles and Guidelines on Access to Justice (Principle 2 and 3).

For example the use of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) in criminal proceedings should not be denied on account that a child's will is being expressed through an assistive technology device. Nor should a testimony from a child that uses AAC be seen as less credible.[44] The court should be accommodative to the device that the child prefers to use, and should not impose AAC devices that the child is not used to. It might be necessary to adopt procedures for hearings that ensure the fair treatment and full participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, during proceedings, as appropriate, such as:

- Adaptation of the venue;
- Appropriate waiting spaces;
- Removal of cloaks and wigs;

[44] There are findings in some countries, such as the US, where testimony of a child with AAC that spoke little or not at all was denied because they were using a device that spoke for them. Since it could not be established if what was coming out of the device was what the child actually means to say. Or generally there is misunderstand or mistrust or what the devices actually.

- Adjustments to the pace of proceedings;
- Separate building entrances and waiting rooms and protective screens to separate persons with disabilities from others if necessary due to physical or emotional distress;
- Modifications to the method of questioning in appropriate circumstances, such as allowing leading questions, avoiding compound questions, finding alternatives to complex hypothetical questions, providing extra time to answer, permitting breaks as needed and using plain language;
- Use of pretrial video recording of evidence and testimony, as both a form of accommodation and protection of the child;
- Allowing persons with disabilities, at all stages of the process if they so choose, to be accompanied by family, friends or others to provide emotional and moral support, without replacing, however, the role of an intermediary or facilitator.

Communication support means that all processes in the justice system provide the technical and other support necessary for parties, witnesses, claimants, defendants and jurors to use any form of communication as necessary for their full participation, including: (i) Assistive listening systems and devices; (ii) Open, closed and real-time captioning, and closed caption decoders and devices; (iii) Voice, text and video-based telecommunications products; (iv) Videotext displays; (v) Computer-assisted real-time transcription; (vi) Screen reader software, magnification software and optical readers; (vii) Video description and secondary auditory programming devices that pick up audio feeds for television programmes.

The Communication could be further supported by intermediaries or facilitators and through the use of third parties, including: (i) Note-takers; (ii) Qualified sign language and oral interpreters; (iii) Relay services; (iv) Tactile interpreters.

The intermediaries, facilitators and interpreters should be able to interpret effectively, accurately and impartially, both receptively (i.e. understanding what persons with disabilities are saying) and expressively (i.e. having the skill necessary to convey information back to those persons), while using any necessary specialised vocabulary (e.g. legal or medical) and respecting professional and ethical standards.

02

PART 2
DIGITAL INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR THE MODEL MULTIDISCIPLINARY COOPERATION SYSTEM

2.1 Proof of concepts: new solutions for victims with disabilities' participation in criminal justice

In the following sections, we will propose the blueprint of the Digital Information System for victim support in Bulgaria. The designed system, called Diana, has been envisioned as a multi-function, multi-role application for victim data collection, procedural accommodation identification, risk assessment, data management, expert system information through an AI chatbot, and for the provision of a secure chat for operators. The system aims to facilitate procedural accommodations and enable collaboration between multiple agencies and, the most impactful, facilitate access to information to the child, and where relevant, family, of their rights, case and what will happen in the proceedings.

The proposed system takes into account the recommendations given by the children at the CABs meetings. The children opted for an intuitive online platform where they can find up-to-date information on their rights and the procedures that affect them. According to their requirements the platform should include:

- Short educational videos explaining children's rights, what constitutes a crime, and how to report an incident.
- Live chat and real-time support, allowing children to ask questions and receive immediate responses from trained professionals.
- A verified, secure system endorsed by legal and law enforcement institutions to ensure credibility and safety.
- Emergency features, such as a panic button that allows children to send urgent distress signals if they feel in danger.

Additionally, the platform should provide access to psychological support, a helpline for immediate assistance, and a forum where children can read success stories and share experiences. This not only empowers children but also reassures them that they are not alone.

2.1.1. Diana: Data Gathering

This section illustrates the ways in which Diana will collect data on crime victims: this data will be used to activate the most important functions of the system (for example, risk assessment).

2.1.1.1. National Context

In Bulgaria, at present, each of the criminal procedural bodies maintain their own electronic case management system. A limited access to the prosecution's system is granted to the investigating authorities, enabling them to track a case. Social services also have their own internal case management system, with only their staff having access to it. The professionals from the Child Protection Departments themselves do not have access to the cases, apart from the publicly available information.

A **Unified Court Information System (UCIS)** was established within the court system. UCIS was gradually introduced in all courts by appellate districts, with the exception of the administrative courts and the Supreme Administrative Court. The System is a centralised web-based application for organising case management processes electronically. UCIS integrates the entire case management process, from the registration of the initiating documents, through to the initiation of a case, the random distribution of cases, management of court sittings, adjudication and annulment of acts, court statistics, automatic calculation of judges' caseloads, financial management of the cases, management of summons activity, including via the available mobile application for summoners. Being a web-based information system, UCIS enables an optimal and reliable electronic case management, while guarantying the required information security to protect the information processed and exchanged by the judicial authorities.

UCIS has been integrated with numerous external systems and registers, among which are the Unified Information System to Counter Crime (UISCC), the Integrated e-Justice Portal (IEJP), the Central Web-based Interface for Publishing Judicial Acts (CWBIPJA), the National Legal Aid Bureau (NLBA), the Information System for Insolvency Proceedings (ISIP), the National Population Database, the Commercial Register and the Register of Non-Profit Legal Entities, the BULSTAT Register, the Information System of the National Revenue Agency, the Information System of the National Social Security Institute, the Automated Information System for the Bulgarian Identity Documents.

The Integrated e-Justice Portal (IEJP) was launched in Bulgaria in December 2019. It is an electronic database of the court cases, handled by all courts in the Republic of Bulgaria. It provides an opportunity for everyone to access general information about all court cases with free public access.

In addition, IEJP provides an opportunity for registered access to the full electronic file of a particular court case, including to all the documents contained in the court's case. Access to the electronic case is granted by the court following the filing of a request by a party to the case or its legal representative. Access to a particular electronic case in the system is granted only to the parties and their representatives (assigned in compliance with the law or by way of authorisation), solely after their explicit statement of intention.

IEJP provides an opportunity for carrying out of procedural actions and requests for authentication statements in electronic form through electronic services for citizens and businesses – initiation of court proceedings, submission of documents on initiated cases, serving of papers to citizens, lawyers and persons representing companies, state institutions and municipalities by electronic means, with an integrated feature of recording the time of the serving of the document; electronic payments through a virtual POS terminal, etc. To perform these activities, it is necessary to have a Qualified Certificate for an electronic signature.

It is expected that at a later stage, all courts in the Republic of Bulgaria will join the Portal and that new electronic services will be available, e.g., such as electronic filing of a claim (application).

Certain modifications are made to IEJP to facilitate the access of persons with disabilities to it. It enables the access of people with dyslexia. There is also an option to change some settings, such as font and brightness.

There is also a **Portal for electronic notification and serving of subpoenas**, where the parties and their legal representatives have access to the electronic copies of their subpoenas and notifications. Access to a particular electronic case and the relevant subpoenas and notifications available in the system is granted solely to the parties and their representatives, only upon their explicit statement of intention in writing. The access is granted and managed by the competent court on the case after an application is filled in and submitted. Access is enabled via a user account, protected by a username.

Regarding **the prosecution system**, on the official website of the Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Bulgaria an electronic portal with access to electronic services has been created. The platform can be accessed after registration in the portal. By using a qualified electronic signature, one can request services, including submission of reports and complaints of a crime, domestic violence, submission of claims, comments, objections, appeals of acts, infringing upon the rights and legal interests of the defendants and the victims, requests for the issuing of various certificates.

The portal provides free access, without a registration and electronic signature required, for everyone who needs to check a case file, by entering the reference number of the prosecution case file and the particular Prosecutor’s Office, where it was registered. The information which can be obtained via this channel is very scarce and is limited to tracking the file – whether it is with a prosecutor for resolution, whether it is with an investigative authority, and so on.

Regarding **the police system**, the official website of the Ministry of the Interior provides access to a Portal for electronic administrative services of MoI (PEAS). It provides an opportunity to use electronic services, but only administrative ones. There is no option for filing reports and complaints of crimes.

Regarding **the Child Protection System**, there is no electronic access to the Child Protection System (the Child Protection Departments). The only option available is to submit a request for electronic administrative services on the website of the Agency for Social Assistance (ASA): e.g. applying for an individual needs assessment for persons with disabilities to obtain financial support in accordance with the type of disability.

It is important to establish the option of interoperability of those systems described above having in mind that in case of maximum interoperability, we could achieve the best adaptation of the Diana system, with the aim to have a single digital system in time. In principle, there are 3 options to achieve interoperability:

1. Full interoperability with the systems of the various operators as described above: in this case, the app will ensure the automatic transmission of the data stored in the systems mentioned above, to the database of the Diana app. This solution requires long implementation times and is characterised by a high complexity due mainly to the internal technologies of the judicial system, whose modification might also require a modification of the legislative framework.

2. Partial interoperability with systems of the various operators as described above: in this case, the Diana application will be interoperable with the systems of a limited number of operators. The implementation of this type of interoperability is still complex but could be achieved faster.

3. No interoperability: in this case, the operators will use their own system and the Diana application in parallel.

2.1.1.2. How is data on victims of crime collected by the Diana system?

Data relating to victims of crime will be acquired through different access points which include, on one hand, the possibility for the victim to directly access the system and deposit their data directly on the platform, and, on the other hand, the possibility for the system operators to gather the victim's data and store them in the database.

The access points (AP) will be:

1. Victims of crime/violence. Following registration, a questionnaire will guide the victim in providing the essential data. That data, in addition to contact information, will also cover a description of the crime suffered and all relevant information for the risk assessment and individual assessment related to procedural accommodations.

2. The actors of the support system and protection for victims of crime – State Agency for Child Protection, different NGOs that provide services for victims, etc., will have their access point on a web platform or an operating system specific application. When victims of crime come into contact with one of the actors in the system, they will be asked to provide their contact details and details of the crime they have suffered, which will then be stored in the application. The idea is that such data can be available to all support operators in order to reduce double filing and the resulting risk of secondary victimisation.

For all actors - and especially for those within the judicial system - there is a possibility that the application Diana is interoperable with the system already in place: in this way, professionals will directly use their own data management system as described above in 2.1.1.1 to automatically populate the data in the application. On the other hand, if it is considered that the implementation of interoperability with the various systems already in place is too complex, the system will still be implementable as a stand-alone application. The operators will use their own system and the Diana application in parallel. Although this may represent a redundant activity, it is still necessary to keep in mind the advantage of using Diana for the acquisition of data at the first access point as that will then be usable by all other operators involved in the protection process and in criminal proceedings.

The data entered may also be modified, depending on the access levels (and therefore the roles of the operator), during the various stages of the procedure. This will allow a constant update of the data and the supply of constantly updated data in real time. The operators' access points that will allow to deposit victim's data, are the following:

a. AoP Police;

b. AoP Prosecutor's Office;

c. AoP Support Services;

d. AoP Anti-violence centres, NGOs providing support to victims;

e. AoP Lawyers authorised by the victim;

f. AoP Healthcare system operators.

h. AoP victim's app.

Another adaptation based on the national legislative framework, regards the type of data that the system can acquire. The various categories of data can therefore be supplemented:

- Contact details- name, address, nationality, id, date of birth;
- Type of crime suffered or description of the violence suffered;
- Risk assessment factors:
    - Manner of the offence (time, place, object, nature, species, means used to commit the crime);
    - Motives for crime (for example, crime committed with violence against the person, in a domestic environment, with racial hatred, for the purpose of discrimination, etc.);
    - Criminal record of the offender;
    - Previous complaints filed by the victim.
- Factors related to procedural accommodation assessment
    - Disability

    - Health status
    - Gender
    - Age
- Family status;
- Education data;
- Phase of the proceedings.

Other relevant data related to the context may be added.

2.1.2 Diana: Case Management System

The data acquired will be accessible in different ways and at different levels by users using the system, including victims. Users (judicial and external actors and victims) will be able to access the above data following their authentication and identification. This widespread access allows the exchange of data useful for the various procedures of support and protection of the victim. The data filed may also include documents in pdf format or other formats (especially for documents related to evidence, which can be added during the different phases of the proceedings to support the judicial system).

The data stored will be kept on a central server. The entity or operator that maintains and updates this server may be of a different nature and will be selected by the Bulgarian government. Who will be the operator depends on policy decisions, the organisation of the system and the legislative framework. Considering the Bulgarian context, it is very likely this operator to be the Ministry of Justice.

The identification of users and their authentication will be based on a strong authentication system. Indeed, when designing an authentication system for an app that gathers and manages sensitive data, it is crucial to implement a strong, multi-layered approach to ensure robust security. Here are the recommended technologies at the basis of the authentication system:

Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)

Description: MFA requires users to present two or more verification factors to access the application. This usually includes something the user knows (password), something the user has (a mobile device or security token), and something the user is (biometrics).

Implementation:

Primary Factor: A strong password policy with complexity requirements (e.g., minimum length, special characters).

Secondary Factor (options):

- TOTP (Time-based One-Time Password): Use an authenticator app like Google Authenticator or Authy.
- Hardware Token: Physical devices like YubiKey that generate a unique code.
- Biometrics: Fingerprint or facial recognition (especially useful for mobile devices).

Login credentials may be obtained through different methods based on the user involved.

Here is an example how in Bulgaria the different actors can identify themselves when accessing the system:

- Victims of crime

Digital and personal identity of the citizen, provided by the Public Administration to use digital services in a personalised and secure way. In Bulgaria that would be the Qualified Electronic Signature, issued by private companies, licensed by the Bulgarian government to issue such services, or personal identity code, issued by the National revenue agency.

It is very important that victims be provided with access to the information stored by Diana regarding their rights, support services available without necessarily undergoing the processes of identification and authentication. Only when they need to report a crime and need to share personal data and details about the crime they should be subjected to identification and authentication.

Additionally, it should be considered that children under 14 cannot perform legal actions and need to be represented by their parents or guardians. As regards children between 14 and 18, they need to obtain the consent of their parents or guardians, when engaging in legal actions.

Since 17 June 2024, the Directorate "Bulgarian Identity Documents" at the Ministry of Interior is introducing a **new design for Bulgarian identity cards**. To enhance document security, in addition to the photograph, the card will include an electronic information carrier containing biometric data – two fingerprints and a photo. At a later stage, with the inclusion of **an electronic identity certificate**, citizens holding this new type of identity cards will be able to authenticate themselves in the virtual environment when using electronic services and information systems. **Such authentication is more than welcome as it could be widely used by victims of crime to enter the Diana system to access justice and receive support.**

- Police

Credentials provided by the Ministry of the Interior- most likely that would be the Qualified Electronic Signature, issued by private companies, licensed by the authorities to issue such services.

- Prosecutor's office

Credentials provided by the Ministry of Justice- most likely that would be the Qualified Electronic Signature, issued by private companies, licensed by the authorities to issue such services.

- Support services

Digital identity of private and public entities, provided by the Public Administration to use digital services in a personalised and secure manner- most likely that would be the Qualified Electronic Signature, issued by private companies, licensed by the authorities to issue such services.

- Anti-violence centres

Digital identity of private and public entities, provided by the Public Administration to use digital services in a personalised and secure manner- most likely that would be the Qualified Electronic Signature, issued by private companies, licensed by the authorities to issue such services.

- Lawyers authorised by the victim

In Bulgaria, lawyers registered in the Bar Association are enabled to use their Qualified Electronic Signature to sign their clients' cases.

- Healthcare system operators

Digital identity of private and public entities, provided by the Public Administration to use digital services in a personalised and secure manner- most likely that would be the

Qualified Electronic Signature, issued by private companies, licensed by the authorities to issue such services.

2.1.3 Diana: Risk and Procedural Accommodation Assessment – Red Flags

The data will be used for two purposes: on the one hand, the evaluation necessary for the activation of any procedural accommodations; on the other hand, the risk assessment related to repeat victimisation (including intimidation and retaliation). The assessment related to procedural accommodations will be based on factors such as victim's gender, age, disability, socio-family context, etc. The risk assessment on the other hand will be based on factors such as the type of crime, motives for committing crimes, criminal records of the offender, etc.

The first assessment - concerning the application of procedural accommodations - will be based on the following fundamental factors:

- Gender;
- Age;
- Disability
    - Definition of the type of disability and assistive technologies or AAC required for victim participation in the proceedings
- Social, family and emotional background of the victim;
- Context in which the victim has suffered the crime (domestic, family, work, etc.).

Based on these factors, the system will suggest the type of procedural accommodation to be applied in the various stages of the procedure.

The risk assessment will be based on an analysis of the statistical data stored in the system, using artificial intelligence. Data stored in the server indeed after automatic anonymisation will be utilised by the system in order to assess the risks.

The system will bring to light specific patterns and significant relationships between risk factors and events of victimisation, as well as repeated or secondary victimisation. Based on such analyses applied to individual cases, it will be possible to assess the level of risk to which the victim is exposed. The activation of protective measures will depend on this assessment.

This assessment will be based on a number of key factors:

- Type of crime;
- Manner of the offence (time, place, object, nature, specific means used to commit the crime);
- Motives for crime (for example, crime committed with violence against the person, in a domestic environment, with racial hatred, for the purpose of discrimination, etc.);
- Criminal record of the offender;
- Previous complaints filed by the victim;
- Type of disability and its manifestation (sensory, intellectual or psychosocial disability, etc.);
- Type of relationship between the offender and the victim (e.g., marriage, cohabitation, kinship, partnership, neighbourhood, professional relations, etc.);
- Family, social, professional and emotional background of the offender and the victim.

2.1.4 Diana: Expert System and Chatbot

This section describes the information that will be provided by the app through a chatbot based on artificial intelligence: among these, for example, there will be information related to what is violence, what is crime, the methods for filing a complaint, information explaining the stages of criminal proceedings, the procedural accommodations available, the territorial assistance services most close to the victim, asking for facilitator online (psychologist, social worker, lawyer etc.) as well as child-friendly guidelines for access to justice. The information provided must be age-, gender- and disability- appropriate.

For example:

- AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants can provide general legal information that is summarised and accessible (easy to read).

- They can help children and vulnerable groups to understand their rights and to exercise them.
- They can simplify complex legal language for better accessibility.
- AI can assess the legal issue and direct users to the appropriate resources or legal professionals.

Speech-to-text and text-to-speech tools can assist people with disabilities.

2.1.5 Diana: Internal Encrypted Secure Chat

The application will be equipped with an internal chat that will allow coordination and exchange of information between the professionals dealing with the individual case.

In Bulgaria, there is no internal chat for exchange of information about a case between the criminal justice professionals, child protection services and other important actors. Such internal chat is not envisaged in the respective legislation. This is mainly due to the application of the guiding principles of the Bulgarian criminal procedural law such as *Immediacy and Orality of the Criminal Process*, which refers to principles in criminal procedure that emphasise directness (e.g., evidence and testimonies presented directly to the court) and verbal proceedings conducted orally during the trial and the principle of *Formalism of the Criminal Process*, which refers to the structured and procedural nature of criminal proceedings, emphasising adherence to established legal rules, protocols, and formal requirements to ensure fairness and consistency in the administration of justice.

2.1.6 Diana Inclusivity: Assistive technologies integrated to the system

This section describes the different assistive technologies and inclusion methods that will be included in the system in order to guarantee the widest participation of all categories of users: among these, speech to text technology; word prediction software; speech recognition technology; visual reminders.

Regarding the inclusion of children and victims with a lack of knowledge of legal terms, information provided through the application will be simplified and based on the use of accessible language.

As regards disability, the aim of the system-integrated or system-compatible assistive technologies will be to allow access and use of the system also for users with different types of disabilities such as:

1. Vision Impairment

In order to support users' inclusion and participation, the application will have integrated speech to text technology that will convert automatically in speech all the text appearing in the application.

2. Physical Impairment

Some physical impairment may affect the person's ability to write, access and sign documents and other items presented digitally. Diana will support the integration with technologies such as word prediction software that can assist individuals with physical disabilities for instance by reducing the keystrokes required to type. This is particularly helpful for individuals with limited dexterity or strength.

Diana can also be compatible with speech recognition technology, which allows users to control their computer and input text using their voice. This technology can assist individuals who find it challenging to use a standard keyboard and mouse.

3. Learning/Intellectual Impairment

The application may support the integration or compatibility with speech synthesis and communication apps supporting symbol grids and Picture Exchange Communication Systems. Speech synthesis will include the use of symbols and pictures alongside text provided by Diana. This can help users with intellectual disabilities to understand legal documents and communications more easily.

Additionally, Diana will include visual reminder tools, like alarms with icons or apps that use pictures to signal tasks, that help users to stay on track with dates or appointments (such as auditions or hearings). Visual reminder tools will incorporate also memory aids that may help users remember important information and can assist individuals in recalling details about their case, the sequence of events, or instructions provided by the application.

2.1.7 Diana: Cybersecurity

This section illustrates the technologies that will allow the protection of the data used by the application. In particular, the stored data will be made secure by applying blockchain technology. Furthermore, Diana will involve a combination of technologies designed to protect integrity, confidentiality, authenticity, and availability of exchanges: among these, data encryption, secure file transfer protocols, continent filtering, endpoint protection, virtual private networks (VPNs).

2.2 Conclusions

The proposed blueprint of the Digital Information System for victim assistance, Diana is an innovative and ambitious project. This system - accessible to victims and other users working for their protection (police, prosecutor's office, support services, anti-violence centres, lawyers authorised by the victim and healthcare system operators) – has been envisioned as a multi-function, multi-role application for victim data collection, procedural accommodation definition, risk assessment, data management, expert system information through an AI chatbot, and for the provision of a secure chat for operators.

The construction and implementation of this system in Bulgaria poses several challenges:

1. Change of the criminal legislation in order to allow the use of the technologies in the criminal proceedings for example adjusting the principles of Immediacy and Orality of the Criminal Process and of Formalism of the Criminal Process;
2. Training of all professionals to adjust their functions using technologies; campaigning how they could be more effective and supported in their

professional performance by using tools offered by technology; fighting conservative and narrow-minded perception of the criminal proceedings and in particular of the methods how protection of the victims can be provided;

3. Securing the privacy protection of the personal data and criminal record;
4. Ensuring the confidentiality, limited usage of the data gathered only for the purposes of the criminal process and protection of the victims;
5. Ensuring interoperability between the existing electronic systems in the criminal justice operators and the child protection services in order to provide support and information to victims in an effective and timely manner;
6. Conducting a campaign and trainings how technologies can provide effective procedural accommodations to users from vulnerable groups (children, children with disabilities, young girls etc) and risk assessment to prevent further crimes or revictimisation

03

PART 3
CASE STUDY

3.1 Case study

The following mock case is based on a real case of a child with intellectual disability, victim of sexual abuse. Due to the malfunction of the criminal justice system in Bulgaria this case was not properly investigated and was not examined in court proceedings, the victim was not offered any compensation, rehabilitation and reparation and the perpetrator was not investigated and punished.

The mock case below illustrates the application of the proposed Digital Information System for victim assistance to the particular case and what could be the expected results of such system.

A mock case:

Any – a child with cerebral paralysis that cannot move her body (including hands and fingers) and is non-verbal. Any had suffered violence at the school she visits. She is an ACC user and communicates through a computer controlled by her eye sights. Any is accessing Digital Information System for victim assistance in order to get the following information and support:

1. She wants to verify that the violence she has suffered is indeed a crime punishable by the criminal law. She finds detailed information in easy-to-read format in the Diana system. Any would be introduced to her rights including her right to reasonable accommodations. She would be informed about all available accommodations.
2. At the same time, regardless of whether the violence she suffered is a crime or not, she would like to get some support to fight the trauma. She gets a list of support organisations that offer a wide range of services for her. Diana also has ordered those organisations according to the place and the address where Any lives. If Any wants to contact some of these organisations, Diana offers ready to go messages to them with information about Any's disability in order to inform the organisations what type of specialist Any would need.
3. Any might need a facilitator to guide her through the process of filing a complaint and undergoing the criminal proceedings. This facilitator could be the chatbot that Diana offers, which combines special knowledge in order to provide legal, psychological, social support to Any as well as to offer her procedural

accommodations and help her to choose the most appropriate considering her status.

4. Any decides to raise a complaint for the violence she suffered. Diana is directing her to legal help in order to get a lawyer to assist her in the complaint and to present her in the upcoming proceedings.
5. Once the complaint is ready, Diana offers a channel for its secure submission to the relevant authorities. The police, the prosecution and the child protection authorities.
6. Receiving and processing the complaint. Diana would facilitate an internal system through which each of the actors concerned (police, prosecution, judiciary, child protection authorities) has an assigned task. The system is designed in such a way that each institution can update information regarding the execution of its task, monitor the progress of others on their tasks, facilitate coordination among institutions, provide information on the development of the case, and inform the victim about the status of the complaint, the actions taken, and the expected outcomes.
7. When Any's case reaches the court, Diana would offer her a communication intermediary in order to enable and secure her participation in the court proceedings, exercising her rights and being understood properly.
8. If compensation is assigned to Any by the court, Any would get all necessary information from Diana to actually collect and receive the financial means.