Guidelines for assistance to victims of terrorism

1. We the Ministers and Ministers of State in charge of victims assistance for the Kingdom of Belgium, the Czech Republic, the French Republic, the Hellenic Republic, Hungary, the Italian Republic, the Kingdom of Spain, Romania, on the 10th of March 2017, on the European Remembrance Day for Victims of terrorism;

2. Following the call on the construction of an interdisciplinary and better coordinated international policy for victims assistance emphasized at the International Conference for Victims Assistance in Paris, at UNESCO, on January 9th 2017 and taking into account the work undertaken by the European Union, in particular the 2012 Victims’ Rights Directive (Directive 2012/29/EU), the 2004 Compensation Directive (Directive 2004/80/EC) and the recent provisions on support, assistance and protection to victims of terrorism under the Counter-terrorism Directive adopted by the Council on 7 March 2017;

3. Facing a proliferation in terrorist acts that endanger basic democratic principles such as the respect of human rights, the rule of law and social cohesion, we are aware of the need to further our cooperation in order to increase our security and fight more effectively against terrorist organizations. This action must be accompanied by better coordinated assistance to victims of attacks. Specific attention should be paid to children and young victims;

4. Victims assistance implies dangers and entails responses that can no longer be apprehended solely at a national level. Our action is bound to have an international dimension and in particular we intend to focus on cross-border cases. In Brussels, Nice, Berlin or Paris, several dozen different nationalities were counted among the victims of the attacks. In these situations, the need for coordination between our various services is essential for victims assistance;

5. In order to provide the most appropriate responses to the needs of victims of terrorist acts and to provide them with a base of shared services and support, both in the direct aftermath and in the follow-up phase, we are calling for the development of a more ambitious and structured European policy on victims support, based on the existing EU minimal standards and aimed at going beyond these standards, in accordance with the principles of mutual aid, solidarity and subsidiarity that irrigate the European Union’s action.

Organization of the victim support system

6. We encourage the pooling of resources at the national level and acknowledge the interest of a single authority responsible for steering and coordinating the various emergency services and accompanying victims on a long-term basis. A reflection on the creation of a single European clearinghouse and a unique telephone number and a single internet portal could be foreseen;

7. We believe that public policies on victims assistance should pay particular attention to the care to children and young victims;
8. We reaffirm our desire to a better coordination of public policies on victims assistance and the actions of the personnel in the field, in order to help in structuring the networks of victim support stakeholders and to build an intergovernmental network of EU members authorities to improve the cooperation between them to support victims of terrorism;

9. We are determined to improve the sharing of information and exchanges of good practices between signatory States in order to strengthen the European victims' rights base. The training of professionals of victim support should be better harmonized;

10. We encourage the work of victims' associations and civil society to support victims and their families and to draw attention to the different issues they face;

11. We remind the importance of improving citizens’ access to information on how to assist victims in a spirit of respect for their dignity and the dignity of their families. We encourage actions to enable citizens to be actors of their own safety and the safety of others, including training in life-saving techniques.

Access to comprehensive assistance

12. We would like to underline the importance of providing victims of terrorism urgent and long-term medical, psychological, and social assistance suitable for the needs arising from the attacks;

13. Coordination between social protection and social security systems, in particular regarding the care of victims of terrorism, should be improved.

Compensation for victims

14. We are concerned with ensuring victims of terrorism’s right to fair restitution, reparation or compensation, without any income requirement. This right shall also apply to members of their immediate family or beneficiaries of the direct victim to fair restitution, reparation or compensation, without income requirement;

15. We ensure that victims benefit from equal treatment as beneficiaries of a compensation program, depending on the harm suffered, whatever their personal circumstances are;

16. We encourage better sharing of information between national compensation services, in order to simplify procedures and avoid situations of double compensation. Consideration could be given to the creation of a European compensation fund.

Access to information and privacy, dignity and safety of victims

17. In order to safeguard the right to information while protecting the privacy of victims and their families, in accordance with ethics principles, we urge those concerned to avoid the broadcasting and use of information or images of victims of terrorism for dishonorable, degrading or sensationalist purposes, while respecting the freedom of the press;

18. We wish to raise public awareness on the risks that social media can represent when they convey information or images of a private and potentially shocking nature of the victims or of the terrorist attacks;

19. We ensure that victims are informed of their rights towards the media, their right to control their image and their right to privacy;

20. We ensure victims and their families have the right to the protection of their privacy and the respect of their private life.

Care for victims
21. In order to enhance a cooperation and communication at EU level that would take into account the interests of victims of terrorist acts who are not residents of the State in which the attack took place, and taking into account existing EU rules on the cooperation between the Member States in the relevant sectors, we guarantee to all victims the rights to assistance, support and access to all available support services;

22. We wish to facilitate contact between national victim services with the diplomatic and consular representations of the victims’ countries of origin, so that they are able to provide effective assistance to their nationals who are victims of an act of terrorism perpetrated abroad;

23. We promise to carry out a census of all persons affected by an attack, regardless of their nationality and residence status, and to inform them in a comprehensive manner of their right of access to justice, the conditions of compensation for victims in the country concerned and the existence of support organizations;

24. We reaffirm the need to allow foreign victims the access to a single clearinghouse, available in several languages and adapted to persons with disabilities;

25. We encourage the development of multilingual information media outlining national victim support services and facilities and expanding the circulation of informational materials on victim support systems in foreign languages. A list could be made available to the victims with the contact details of competent and voluntary professionals who can accompany them.

**Experts Committee**

26. Member States shall appoint national representatives to serve on the Experts Committee on Assistance to Victims of Terrorism, known as the "Civic Committee";

27. The "Civic Committee" is in charge of considering how to implement these guidelines.

**Signatories:**

Mrs Maggie de BLOCK,
Minister for Social Affairs and Health in the Kingdom of Belgium

Mr Koen GEENS,
Minister of Justice in the Kingdom of Belgium

Mr D. Luis AGUILERA RUIZ,
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Mrs Juliette MEADEL,
State Secretary attached to the Prime minister, in charge of victims assistance in France

For the Hellenic Republic

Mr Krisztián KECSMÁR,
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Mr Andrea ORLANDO,
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For the Czech Republic