

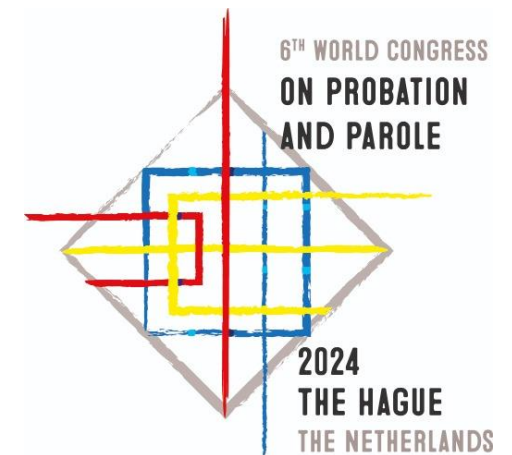


JUDICIAL VICTIM SUPPORT IN THE FLEMISH PROBATION SERVICE

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6TH WORLD CONGRESS
ON PROBATION AND PAROLE

THE HAGUE 2024



CONTENT

1. THE PROBATION SERVICE IN FLANDERS / BELGIUM
2. WHAT IS JUDICIAL VICTIM SUPPORT BY THE PROBATION SERVICE ?
3. CONCLUSIONS



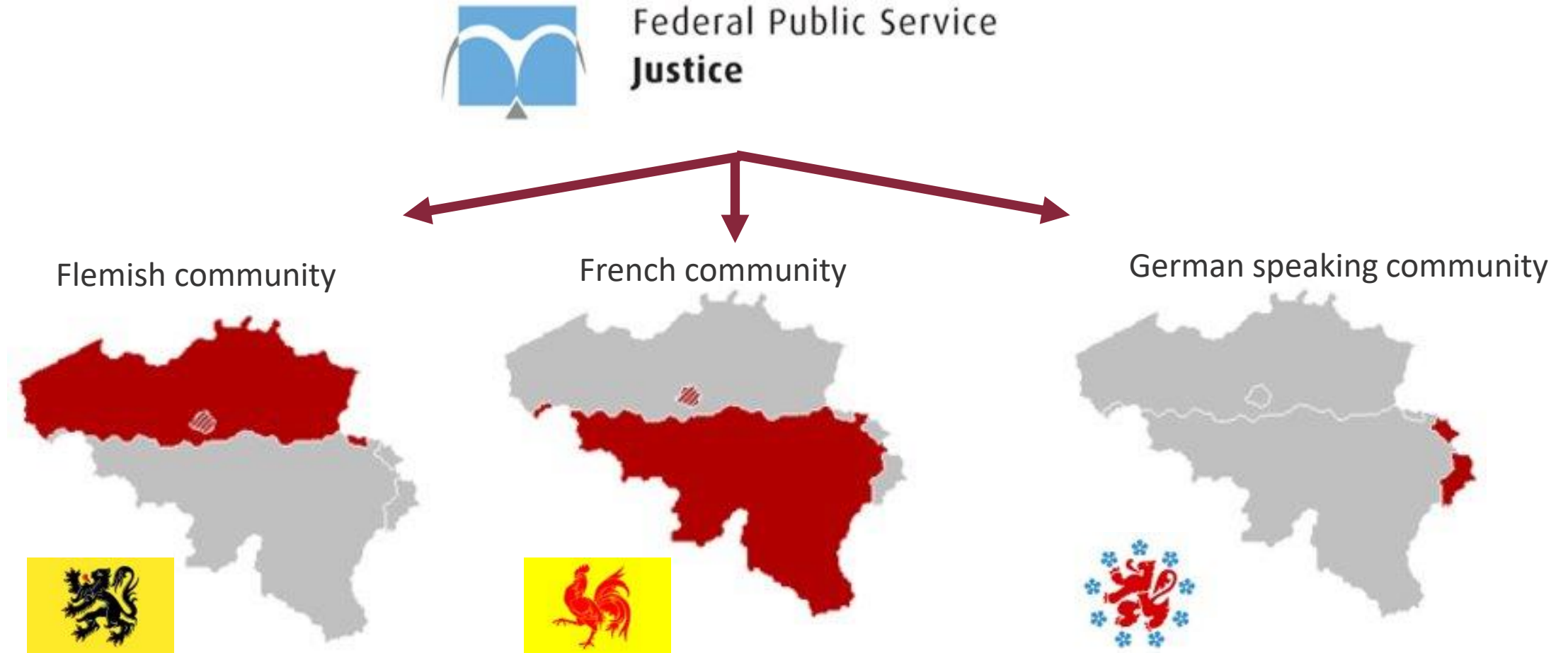
FLEMISH
JUSTICE &
ENFORCEMENT
AGENCY

1. THE PROBATION SERVICE IN FLANDERS / BELGIUM

AGENTSCHAP
JUSTITIE &
HANDHAVING

1. THE PROBATION SERVICE IN FLANDERS / BELGIUM

2014-2015

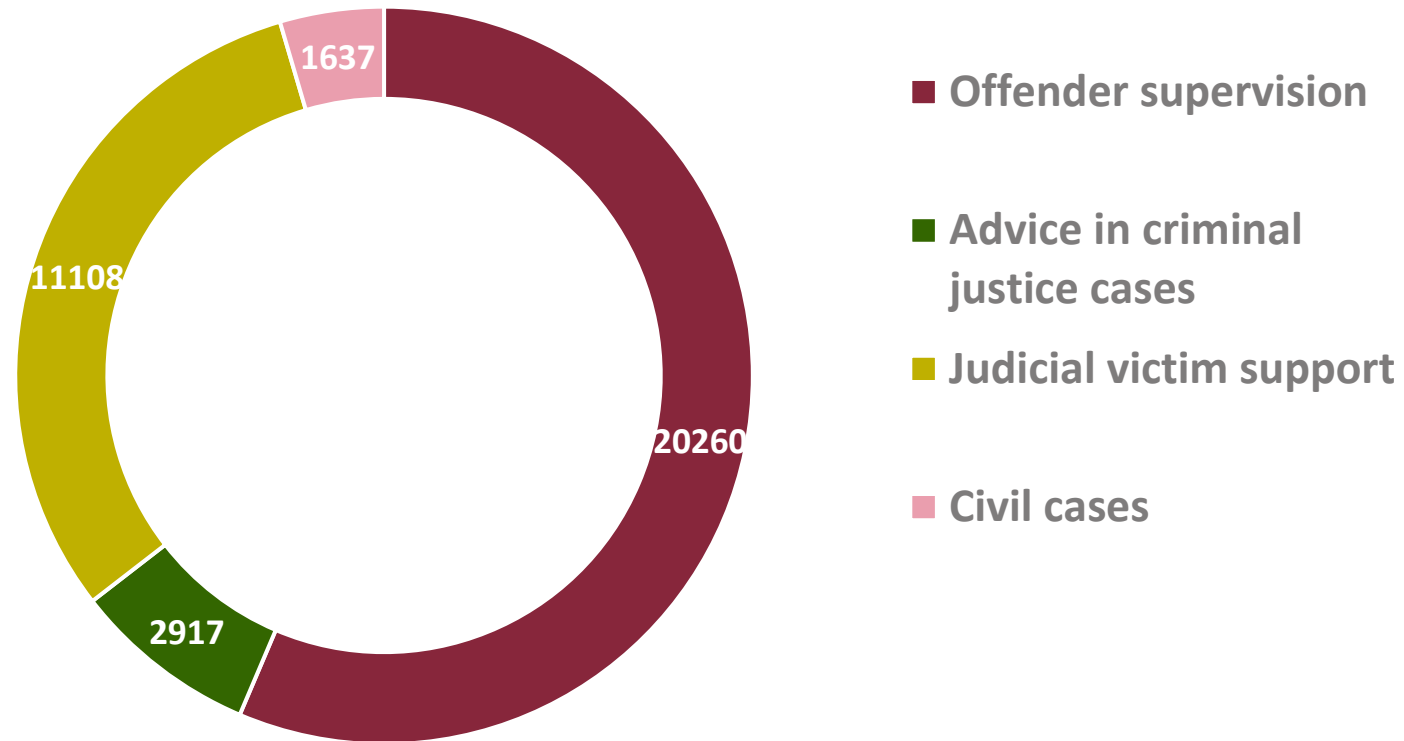


1. THE PROBATION SERVICE IN FLANDERS (BELGIUM)

- Part of the **ministry of Justice of Flanders**
- Part of the **Flemish Justice and Enforcement Agency** (staff : **1.200**)
- **15 locations** in Flanders
- The total number of staff of the **probation service** is **820**, of which about **700** are probation workers
- Of these 700, about **75** are operational in the local Judicial Victim Support Units

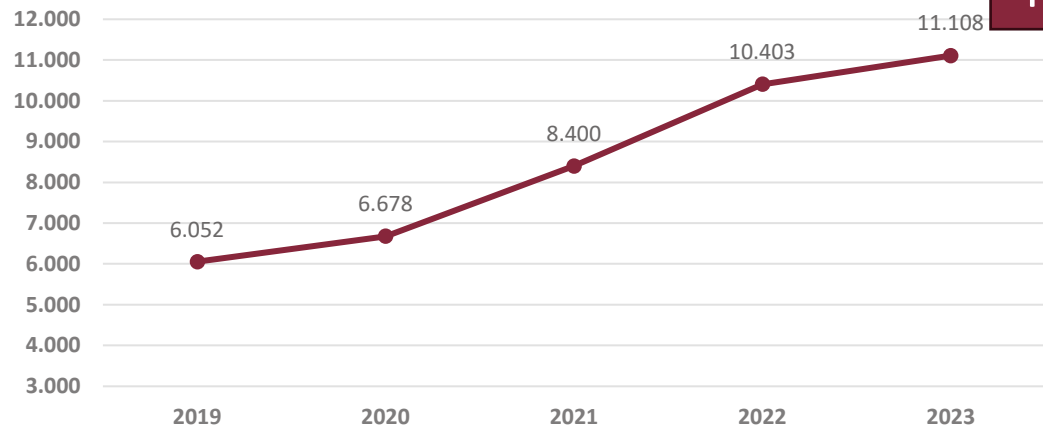
1. THE PROBATION SERVICE IN FLANDERS (BELGIUM)

New **Cases** (2023)



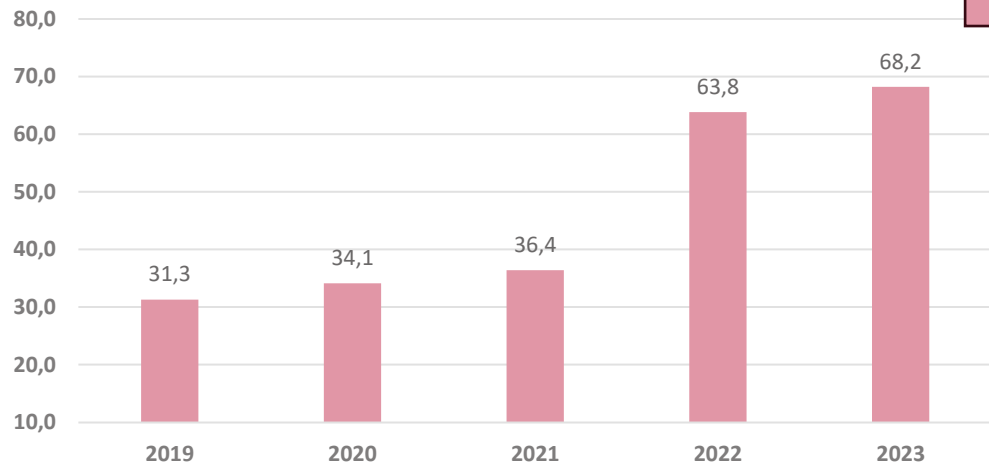
Judicial victim support: key figures

New cases



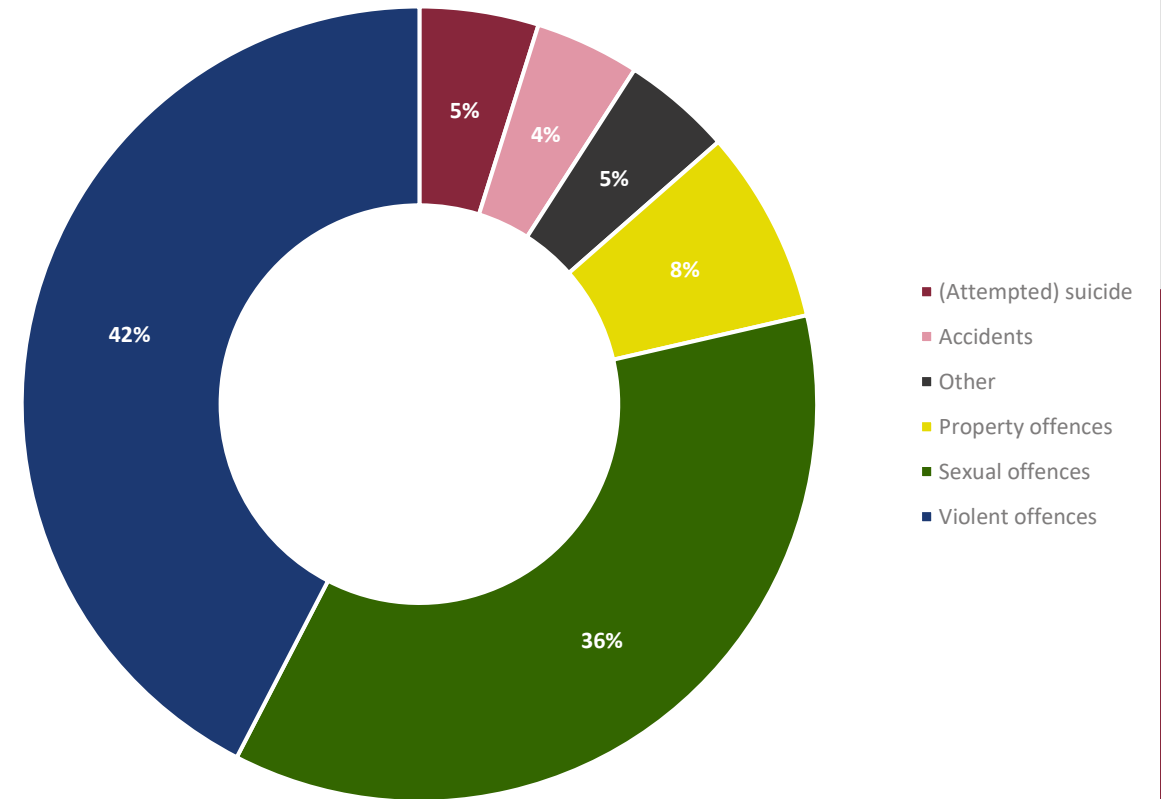
+84%

FTE



+118%

Type of cases (2023)





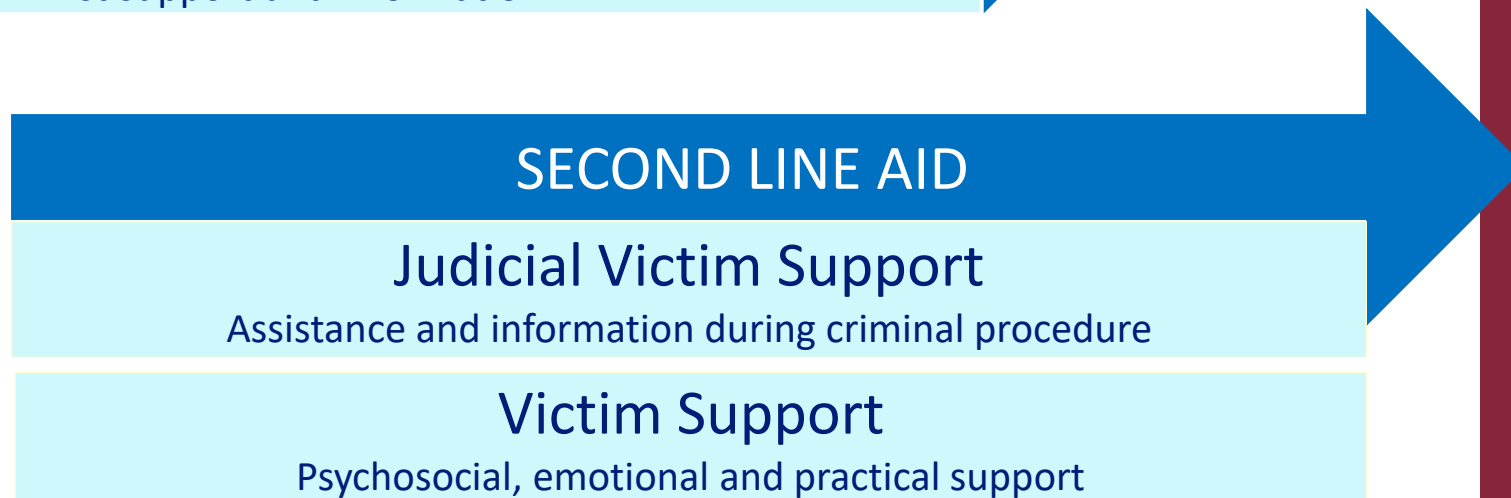
2. WHAT IS JUDICIAL VICTIM SUPPORT BY THE PROBATION SERVICE?

1. CONTEXT

1. Victim support services



Consultation /
Collaboration
between services



2. INTERVENTION

- The intervention of the Judicial Victim Support Service is part of the victim policy, which has a **dual objective**:
 - avoiding that judicial intervention leads to secondary victimization
 - providing the victim with the opportunity to overcome the trauma experienced and to find a new balance as quickly as possible.

A file can enter the Judicial Victim Support Service in two ways:

- On request of the public prosecutor
 - systematic mandate
 - non-systematic mandate
- On request of the victim / other service → approbation of public prosecutor

The intervention of Judicial Victim Support Service is free of charges, no obligation and customized.

3. MISSIONS

Information

Assistance

Referral

Structural

1. Information



- **General**

Civil party

**Judicial
investigation**

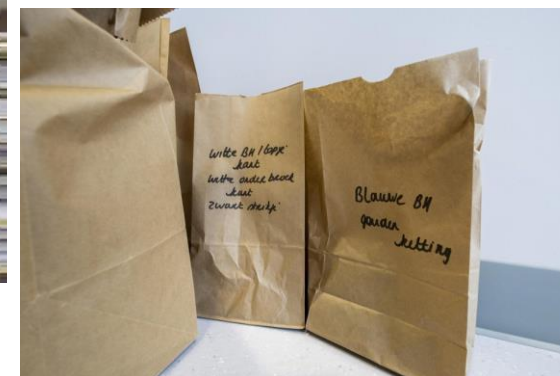
prosecutor

*Victim-offender
mediation*

- **Specific** about the case and the ongoing procedure

2. Assistance

- Reconstruction of crime
- Consultation of the criminal file
- Restitution of confiscated belongings
- Victim information sheets
- Courts hearings
- ...



3. Referral



4. Structural

- Raising awareness
- Reporting problems

3. MISSIONS

Limits to the judicial order

- no crisis intervention
- no 24/7
- no legal advice, no representation
- no psychological support



4. CASE STUDY

The 2016 Brussels terror attacks file



Role of Judicial Victim Support by the Probation Service



Team Victim Support -
Probation Service Brussels
+ 20 members of other areas





Role of Judicial Victim Support by the Probation Service – some examples

- **Supporting the victims and relatives during the discussions** with the forensic pathologist and the Disaster Victim Identification team of the federal police
- Assisting victims with **accessing the criminal file**, including viewing the images and videos from the surveillance cameras
- Assisting victims with the **restitution of personal belongings** and/or confiscated documents
- Organizing **information sessions and guided tours** at the courthouse where the trial will be held



Role of Judicial Victim Support by the Probation Service – some examples

- **Contacting and re-contacting victims** and relatives at different moments and phases in the proceedings
- Contacts with and **referral to organizations/people** when necessary
- Assistance during several **court sessions**
- Helping victims with the **civil action**
- Organizing **information sessions** on the execution of the sentence phase and help victims to fill in **Victim Information Sheets**.



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3. CONCLUSIONS

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CONCLUSIONS

- I. Judicial Victim Support, offered by the Probation Service, has a crucial role in ensuring that victims rights are enforced and respected.
- II. Necessity of an inter-agency approach: importance of learning how to work together (information sharing, difference in goals and contexts, ...), and identifying best practices.
- III. Importance of sharing good practices, innovative methods and international standards (f.e. Council of Europe, Council of the European Union, United Nations,...)
- IV. Further strengthening of the rights of victims and their family members to information, support and protection remains necessary.

DIRECTIVE 2012/29/EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

of 25 October 2012

**establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and
replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA**



**10 recommendations
for the legislator(s)
(2024)**

10 recommendations for the legislator(s)

1. Continue to increase the **respect** for all victims
2. Give victims the armor of a full **legal position**
3. Ensure that victims have access to **legal aid**
4. Improve victim's rights to receive **information** about their case
5. Strengthen the right to protection of **privacy**
6. Create an accessible **single point of contact** for victims
7. Build a proactive, multi-year and overarching **victim policy**
8. Invest in **free psychological support**
9. Consider needs of victims when **digitizing**
10. Ensure that victims receive their **compensation**

QUESTIONS ?



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