



# General Assembly

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## European Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fifteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

Vienna, 25–27 March 2025

### Draft report

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### Addendum

## II. Recommendations (*continued*)

### B. Substantive items and workshops – Agenda item 5 (b)

2. **Promoting people-centred, inclusive and responsive criminal justice systems in a world of continuous change (agenda item 4); and ensuring equal access to justice for all: towards safe and secure societies while respecting the rule of law (workshop 2)**
  1. A presentation was delivered by a representative of the Secretariat introducing the substantive agenda item and workshop topic.
  2. Statements were made by the Russian Federation, Belgium, Spain, Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Türkiye.
  3. A statement was also made by the representative of the European Union.<sup>1</sup>
  4. Statements were also made by the observers for OSCE and INTERPOL.
  5. Statements were furthermore made by the observers for the Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the Association for the Prevention of Torture.

### Summary of deliberations

6. Several speakers highlighted that promoting measures that aim to make criminal justice systems more people-centred and inclusive was of utmost importance for safeguarding the fundamental rights of affected persons, both suspects and accused persons as well as victims of crime. A number of speakers called for equal access to justice for all to be at the centre of global policies on criminal justice, by addressing root barriers to access to justice, ensuring a human rights and trauma informed

<sup>1</sup> Also on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the European Union.



victim/survivor approach, investing in non-custodial sentences, adopting a whole-of-sector approach and ensuring integrity and accountability of justice agencies. Examples of measures to increase access to justice such as establishing local structures and information points providing remote assistance and ensuring access to legal aid were highlighted.

7. Speakers mentioned that it is important to ensure equal access to justice for persons who are particularly vulnerable in the context of criminal proceedings, such as persons with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities and victims of crime. Such people-centred approach would ensure that justice systems are not only effective in addressing crime but also supportive and accessible to those most affected. Speakers also highlighted that when adopting new technologies, it was key to ensure that existing standards were not undermined as new developments engender new challenges and new (digital) vulnerabilities.

8. A number of speakers highlighted that by enhancing a culture of support and addressing systemic challenges, such as discrimination, societies can work towards justice and security for all. Ensuring access to justice for persons who are particularly vulnerable in the context of criminal proceedings was however difficult and shortcomings continued to be noted.

9. Many speakers stressed the necessity to ensure a victim-centred and trauma-informed criminal justice system. Specific measures were presented such as training of practitioners that respond to the specific needs of victims; accessible reporting mechanisms; collaboration and cooperation among all relevant stakeholders coming in contact with victims, and public awareness campaigns that educate communities about victims' rights and the importance of a fair justice system.

10. The benefit of investing in restorative justice which can provide an effective alternative to traditional criminal sanctions by focusing on reparation, accountability and reintegration was mentioned.

11. A number of speakers highlighted efforts to improve law enforcement and criminal justice procedures in order to modernize them and make them more effective. Several speakers presented examples of the use of technology to increase access to justice and efficiency of criminal justice processes, such as remote court procedures, online submission of documents, court rulings in electronic form and integrated national criminal justice information systems.

12. A number of speakers mentioned the importance of mainstreaming gender in the criminal justice system, in particular by implementing ambitious and horizontal programmes that focus on prevention and response to gender-based violence and sexual violence, focusing on women and their specific needs and by addressing gender stereotypes in responding to organized crime.

13. Reference was also made by a few speakers to their countries' criminal justice policies aiming to respect diversity, including specific awareness and reintegration programmes for people convicted of hate crimes.

14. Some speakers stressed that as regards children, it is essential that criminal justice systems are designed to function in a manner which is compatible with the best interests of the child, as required by international law and which pursues as the primary goal their reintegration into society. An individual assessment of the factors that contributed to the child committing a criminal offence and the application of measures that address those factors was required. With regard to child victims, speakers mentioned the necessity to ensure the availability of targeted and integrated support services that respond to the specific needs of those children, including through the provision of trauma-informed care and multi-stakeholder approaches. Particular attention was also needed to protect child victims of online crime and recruitment by organized criminal groups.

15. Many speakers emphasized the importance of specialized responses to ensure that the specific needs of groups and individuals in situations of vulnerability, such

as people with disabilities to reduce vulnerabilities including as relates to digital vulnerabilities are addressed in the criminal justice system. Reference was made to specialized responses to inmates with mental health conditions such as intervention programmes run by multidisciplinary teams, therapeutic communities that specifically accommodate people with such conditions and referral to specialized support services upon release to ensure the continuity of treatment.

16. Concern was further raised about the constant increase in the number of inmates over 60 years of age and reference made to research done including on their most common criminological profile and the necessary health responses.

### **Outcome of deliberations**

17. The following recommendations, which were not negotiated by the participants, were identified:

(a) Collect data on which kinds of vulnerabilities are most likely to remain undetected and therefore unaddressed by existing procedural rights frameworks'; and exchange of good practices for ensuring the systematic and effective identification of such vulnerabilities and practices/safeguards accounting for them;

(b) Collect and exchange of good practices on the identification and necessary safeguards for persons with less visible (intellectual and psychosocial disabilities) or digitalization-related kinds of vulnerabilities;

(c) Adopt a victim-centred and gender-responsive approach including by enhancing victim support services that are tailored to the specific needs of victims; strengthening victim participation in the criminal justice process; providing continuous training for all actors coming into contact with victims; ensuring that victims are treated in a respectful, sensitive, tailored, professional and non-discriminatory manner;

(d) Undertake individual assessments and provide related measures with regard to children in contact with the law; and collect and exchange good practices on the implementation of such assessments and measures;

(e) Place equal access to justice for all at the centre of global policies on criminal justice, by addressing root barriers to access to justice, ensuring a human rights and trauma informed victim/survivor approach, investing in non-custodial sentences, adopting a whole-of-sector approach and ensuring integrity and accountability of justice agencies;

(f) Strengthen judicial systems and improve their responsiveness and operation, to contribute to a more accessible justice system, including by using the benefits of digitalization while committing that any use of technology is in full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms; strengthen the proximity of the judicial institution by developing local structures and information points designed to ensure a local presence or by promoting remote assistance;

(g) Improve training for the various stakeholders in the criminal justice system to ensure people-centred justice and equal access to justice for all; consider the specialization of judiciary and law enforcement agencies in certain types of cases;

(h) Provide better support for people in vulnerable situations, including people with disabilities and older persons, by taking measures to facilitate their access to justice while improving information for litigants on their rights;

(i) Strengthen mechanisms to ensure sustainable funding for and access to legal aid;

(j) Increase investment in restorative justice, which can provide an effective alternative to criminal sanctions, focusing on reparation, accountability and reintegration;

(k) Take action to address the use of technology facilitating serious organized crime by prisoners within the prison system; promote the sharing among stakeholders of good practices in countering serious organized crime in prisons and call for greater international cooperation to tackle serious organized crime in prisons.

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