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JUSTICE

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Ares(2021)s1430481

Dear Mr Mersch,

Thank you for your letter of 29 January 2021 and for raising my attention to the important issue of victims of road traffic. Victims of crime committed in the context of road traffic should indeed be able to rely on their rights to be recognised and treated with respect, dignity, in a tailored, professional and non-discriminatory manner. Under the EU rules on victims' rights, victims of crime committed in the context of road traffic should be able to rely on their rights to access information, to support and protection in accordance with their individual needs and to a set of procedural rights.

This is the reasoning behind the Victims' Rights Directive adopted in 2012 and this is also the logic behind our most recent EU Strategy on victims' rights (2020-2025) adopted in June 2020. The Strategy indeed gives examples of certain victims of crime such as child victims, victims of terrorism or victims of domestic violence as more vulnerable victims who may require specialist support and protection because of the nature of crime or circumstances in which the crime was committed. Nonetheless, the EU Strategy on victims' rights is applicable to all victims of all crime.

The main objective of the EU Strategy on victims' rights is to ensure that all victims of crime independently of where in the EU and in what circumstance the crime took place can fully rely on their rights. This is without a doubt applicable to victims of road traffic related crimes.

Mr Jeannot Mersch
President
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When it comes to particular cases of road traffic accidents, each situation, every road traffic accident should be assessed on an individual, case-by-case basis. Ultimately, it is up to the national judicial authorities to assess in the light of the circumstances of each case whether a particular accident constitutes a crime. In addition, every victim of a road traffic related crime should have access to support and protection in accordance with their individual needs.

European roads are the safest in the world and road safety has improved greatly in recent decades. Nevertheless, the number of deaths and injuries is still far too high and progress has slowed. The European Commission has laid out a plan entitled 'Vision Zero' which endeavours to reduce the incidence of road induced fatalities to a rate of zero by the year 2050¹. In order to be able to achieve the long-term ambition of zero deaths on Europe's roads, the Commission implemented a road safety strategy. The EU works closely on road safety with the authorities in its Member States. It seeks to build on national initiatives, setting targets and addressing all factors that play a role in crashes (infrastructure, vehicle safety, driver behaviour, emergency response).

Please be assured about my commitment to guaranteeing that every victim of crime – including victims of road traffic related crimes – can fully rely on their rights.

Yours sincerely,

(e-signed)

Didier REYNDERS

¹ Details on the initiative can be consulted at https://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/home_en