

## 1 - My rights as a victim of crime

### What information will I get from the authority after the crime occurred (e.g. police, public prosecutor) but before I even report the crime?

The '[Rights of a crime victim](#)' brochure, published by the Finnish Ministry of Justice, provides information on matters that crime victims are entitled to be informed about by the authorities. The brochure briefly explains matters such as how to report a crime, victim support services, legal aid, the possibility of obtaining protection, how to seek compensation, the right to interpretation and translation of documents, and mediation in criminal cases. The printable brochure is intended for distribution to victims and to support communications, particularly in the work of the police and other criminal investigation authorities. The brochure can also be used by judicial authorities, victim support services and others who come into contact with crime victims.

The information given to victims may vary according to their needs, personal circumstances and the type or nature of the crime.

### I don't live in the EU country where the crime took place (EU and non-EU citizens). How are my rights protected?

You may be provided with support and advice even if the offence has been committed in another country. If you have become the victim of a crime in another EU Member State, the criminal investigation authority may, in certain cases, transfer your report of the crime or an already initiated pre-trial investigation to the authorities of another EU Member State. This may be possible, for example, if the offence is serious or if you have not been able to report the crime in the state where it was committed. With serious offences, transfer outside the EU can also be considered.

If you are a victim of human trafficking, you are entitled to the services of the Assistance system for victims of human trafficking even if the crime was committed in another country. The prosecutor decides whether or not to open a pre-trial investigation into a suspected offence involving human trafficking in Finland.

### If I report a crime, what information will I receive?

The police and other criminal investigation authorities will provide you with information on victim support services, how to report a crime, legal aid, the possibility of obtaining protection, how to seek compensation, the right to interpretation and translation services, mediation in criminal cases, the right to obtain information on the hearing of the case, the right to be notified of the release of the offender from prison or pre-trial detention, how to file a complaint about the conduct of the authorities, the procedure for crime victims not residing in the country where the criminal offence was committed, and contact details for any questions related to the case. These rights are described in the '[Rights of a crime victim](#)' brochure.

The information outlined above may not necessarily be provided when you report the crime, especially if you report the crime electronically. The police will inform you about these rights when you are being interviewed. The investigation authority will always inform you if your report does not lead to a pre-trial investigation or in the event that the pre-trial investigation is discontinued or closed.

## Am I entitled to free interpreting or translation services (in my dealings with the police or other authorities, or during the investigation and trial)?

You have the right to use Finnish or Swedish during the pre-trial investigation and trial. If you are a Sámi, you have the right to use the Sámi language within the Sámi Homeland. The authorities must provide interpreting services as needed. If you do not speak the official languages of Finland, you have the right to use a language that you know in any situations relating to the investigation of the crime. If necessary, the authorities must arrange interpretation into a language that you know. The authorities must also arrange interpretation during the investigation and trial if you are a sign language user or if you need interpretation due to a sensory or speech defect. The interpreter has an obligation of secrecy. The interpreter's fee is paid by the state.

You may request a translation of certain key documents. An oral translation may be provided if a written translation of the document is not required for your legal protection. In some cases, you may be provided with only a partial translation or a summary of the document.

During the pre-trial investigation, you have the right to receive a translation of the written confirmation of your report of the offence, a decision to discontinue the investigation and, if necessary, any other document essential to the case. From the prosecutor, you may obtain a translation of a decision not to prosecute.

In court, you have the right to receive a translation of the judgment, a notice concerning the time and place of the court session and, if necessary, any other document essential to the case.

## How do the authorities ensure that I understand them and that I am understood by them (if I am a child; if I have a disability)

The authorities must ensure that interpretation services are available during the pre-trial investigation and trial if you are a sign language user or if you need interpretation due to a sensory or speech defect.

The 'Rights of a crime victim' brochure is also available in easy-to-understand language. The 'If You Become a Victim of a Crime' brochure is available in both easy-to-understand language and in sign language.

Investigators of crimes against children have received special training, including how to interact with and interview a child in criminal proceedings. In certain cases, the child may also be interviewed by a psychologist specialised in interviewing children.

Victim support services

## Who provides victim support?

You may need medical assistance or other social welfare and healthcare services, such as emergency social services, hospital treatment or physical and mental rehabilitation. You may use these services under the same conditions as all other clients.

Many organisations provide support, advice and guidance to crime victims. [Victim Support Finland](#) (*Rikosuhripäivystys*) provides assistance for all types of crimes and criminal proceedings as well as advice relevant to the rights of victims. If you are a victim of domestic violence, you can seek protection and support from shelters. In some localities, special support is available for victims of sexual offences and immigrant women. There is a separate assistance system for victims of human trafficking. You can access these services under certain conditions.

You can contact the support services even if you do not report the crime. With your consent, the police or another criminal investigation authority may forward your contact details to a support service, which will then contact you.

## Will the police automatically refer me to victim support?

If you need special protection or if otherwise required by the nature of the crime or your personal circumstances, the police will, with your consent, forward your contact details to a support organisation. The police should tell you

about the support available for victims of human trafficking and, with your consent, propose that you be admitted to the Assistance system for victims of human trafficking.

## How is my privacy protected?

In order to protect your privacy, the court may, under certain conditions, hear the case without the presence of the public and order the trial documents and judgment to be kept secret to the extent necessary. You may request this from the court. The court may in some cases also order your identity to be kept secret. This applies to crimes such as sexual offences.

## Do I have to report a crime before I can access victim support?

No, you do not.

Personal protection if I'm in danger

## What types of protection are available?

In some cases, you may be questioned in the trial behind a screen, via a video link or without the offender or public being present. When being questioned, you may in some cases be video-recorded and the recording may then be used as evidence in the trial, for example if you are under 18 years of age.

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The court will always consider the trial arrangements and protection measures on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the fact that the rights of the defence must not be restricted. The decision of the court may thus differ from an earlier assessment.

In seriously threatening situations, you may request the non-disclosure of your contact details, non-disclosure for personal safety reasons, a restraining order or even the change of your name or personal identity code. In the most serious cases, you may be admitted to a witness protection programme. Further information is available from the authorities or support services. If you are protected by a restraining order and move to another EU Member State and also feel in need of protection there, you can request the court that issued the original restraining order to issue a European Protection Order.

If you are a victim of domestic violence or you are at risk, the authorities may jointly draw up a safety plan for you as part of a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).

If you are a victim of human trafficking, you have the right to safe accommodation, which may involve special security arrangements at different levels to ensure safe housing for you. In more serious situations, your safety can be ensured in a special safe accommodation unit, as well as through technical equipment or security services. In the most serious situations, you may be admitted to a witness protection programme. The Assistance system for victims of human trafficking is operated by the authorities and, if necessary, will be used to help the police protect you.

## Who can offer me protection?

The police will assess your need for protection and the measures required if you are under threat. The authority deciding on protection will depend on the measures in question (see above). Further information on protection measures is available from the authorities or victim support services.

## Will someone assess my case to see if I am at risk of further harm by the

## offender?

The authorities will assess your specific protection needs during the pre-trial investigation and trial as well as determine the required protection measures. The purpose of the protection measures is to protect you from additional suffering, intimidation or retaliation during the investigation and trial. The assessment will be carried out together with you, taking into account your personal characteristics and circumstances as well as the nature of the crime.

## Will someone assess my case to see if I am at risk of further harm from the criminal justice system (during the investigation and trial)?

The authorities will assess your specific protection needs during the pre-trial investigation and trial as well as determine the required protection measures. The purpose of the protection measures is to protect you from additional suffering, intimidation or retaliation during the investigation and trial. The assessment will be carried out together with you, taking into account your personal characteristics and circumstances as well as the nature of the crime.

## What protection is available for very vulnerable victims?

In seriously threatening situations, you may request the non-disclosure of your contact details, non-disclosure for personal safety reasons, a restraining order or even the change of your name or personal identity code. In the most serious cases, you may be admitted to a witness protection programme. Further information is available from the authorities or support services.

## I am a minor – do I have special rights?

If you are a minor (under the age of 18), you are a vulnerable victim and may therefore need special protection measures. You may be protected by having your interview video-recorded during the investigation, for example, and the recording then being used as evidence in the trial.

If you are a minor, you may be entitled to legal aid at the expense of the state. If your guardian is suspected of having committed an offence against you, a substitute for that guardian must be appointed for you for the criminal proceedings.

If you are a minor victim of human trafficking, you have the right to the services of the Assistance system for victims of human trafficking. If you are a child victim of human trafficking without a residence permit, a representative will always be appointed for you if you are in Finland without a guardian or other legal representative. If you are a child victim of human trafficking and you are a Finnish citizen or hold a residence permit, a substitute for a guardian can be appointed for you. If the criminal investigation is initiated in Finland, as a minor, you may be entitled to a state-funded legal counsel.

## My family member died because of the crime – what are my rights?

When a crime results in the victim's death, the victim's family members, as defined by law, are in the position of an injured party, i.e. the victim. They will then have the same rights as other victims of crime.

## My family member was a victim of crime – what are my rights?

The victim's family members also have access to victim support services.

A minor child of a trafficked person in Finland may also be included in the Assistance system for victims of human trafficking.

## Can I access mediation services? What are the conditions? Will I be safe

## during mediation?

Mediation can be used in criminal matters if both the victim and the suspected offender consent to it. Additional requirements are that the suspect confirms the general course of events and that mediation is in the best interests of the victim. Mediation is free of charge, confidential and always voluntary, and you may choose to end it at any stage. Trained voluntary mediators help the parties in a criminal case to discuss the event and agree on compensation for possible loss or damage caused by the offence. This service is available at mediation offices across the country.

The parties involved in mediation usually have the right to counsel or a support person at the mediation meetings. The mediators, under the guidance of professionals, will assess and ensure safe contact between the parties to the conflict and may, if necessary, suspend the process. Mediation must be suspended if either party withdraws their consent or there is reason to believe that consent has not been freely given.

## Where can I find the laws stating my rights?

Key laws on victims' rights in criminal proceedings include the Criminal Investigations Act (*Esitutkintalaki*, 805/2011) and Criminal Procedure Act (*Laki oikeudenkäynnistä rikosasioissa*, 689/1997). The right to assistance for victims of human trafficking is governed by the Act on the Reception of Persons Applying for International Protection and on the Identification of and Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings (*Laki kansainvälistä suojelua hakevan vastaanotosta sekä ihmiskaupan uhrin tunnistamisesta ja auttamisesta*, 746/2011). These and other laws can be found online [here](#).

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