

Advancing safe reporting for undocumented victims of crime

Final conference of the VISA RoC project

Date

25 September 2024, 9:00 – 15:30

Venue

Bluepoint, Boulevard Auguste Reyers 80, 1030 Brussels

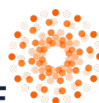
Registration

[Here](#) (by invitation)



for victims of crime
with irregular
migration status

C-MISE
part of the Global Exchange
on Migration & Diversity
[@COMPAS](#)



 Co-funded by
the European Union

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Background

In the face of increasing criminalisation of migration within the EU,¹ the rights and safety of undocumented individuals are increasingly more compromised. The EU's migration policies, by prioritising immigration control over fundamental human rights, have exacerbated vulnerabilities and perpetuated discrimination within marginalized communities.

While the rights enshrined under the [EU Victim Rights Directive](#) are applicable to all victims of crime, without discrimination, including with respect to their residence status, undocumented victims of crime often fear reporting abuses due to the risk of detention and deportation, leading to underreporting and a lack of access to the support and protection they urgently need.

Across the EU, national practices to ensure safe reporting for all undocumented victims are scarce. The Netherlands is the only example where, since 2016, undocumented migrants can enter into a police station to report a crime and be guaranteed to be able to leave freely, without being arrested or detained, regardless of the type of crime reported. At the local level, initiatives such as those in Italy and Barcelona have demonstrated the importance of municipal social departments and specialised units in supporting undocumented victims and facilitating their access to justice. However, the broader territorial competence structure across European countries poses challenges in implementing effective safe reporting practices at the local level.

The VISA RoC project

From 2018-2019, the Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford led a project on "Safe reporting" of crime for victims and witnesses with irregular migration status in the USA and Europe. This research and knowledge-exchange project explored law, policy and practices surrounding the reporting of crime by irregular migrants in the USA and four European countries (Belgium, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands); and assesses the legal and political "replicability" of relevant experiences from the USA in European contexts. It formed part of some of the activities of the [City Initiative on Migrants with Irregular Status in Europe \(C-MISE\)](#), a city-led knowledge-exchange programme supporting European cities in sharing knowledge on city practices and policies responding to the presence of migrants with irregular status in their territory.

In follow up, the VISA RoC project ('Safe reporting for victims of crime with irregular migration status') was launched. Funded by the European Union, VISA RoC addresses the critical need for equal access to justice for undocumented victims. Through collaboration between research institutions, local administrations, NGOs, and relevant stakeholders in Barcelona, Milan, Utrecht, and Ghent, the project aims to foster a safe reporting environment for victims of crime with irregular migration status.

¹ The EU recently adopted the Pact on Migration and Asylum which is expected to increase human rights violations across the EU. For a brief assessment, see the editorial of PICUM December 2023 newsletter '[EU Migration Pact: a historic deal against human rights](#)'. Furthermore, On 28 November 2023, the European Commission [announced](#) a series of initiatives to 'Counter migrant smuggling', including a revision of the Facilitators Package.

The partners in the project are the following:

- University of Barcelona (Coordinator)
- The University of Milan, in association with the Municipality of Milan and the NGO "Cooperativa Lotta contro l'Emarginazione".
- The city of Utrecht, Netherlands
- The city of Ghent, Belgium
- The Institute of Public Security of Catalonia
- Migra Studium
- The Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)

Running from December 2022 to September 2024, through the VISA RoC project, partners conducted comprehensive research to identify obstacles and opportunities for safe reporting of crime for undocumented migrants in each city, incorporating qualitative methodologies to understand the unique local contexts and challenges. Additionally, partners organised training and capacity building activities of key stakeholders such as police, NGOs, and policymakers. Finally, they engaged in communication actions to raise awareness and promote understanding of safe reporting practices.

More information about the project can be found: <https://www.safereporting.eu/project/>

Objectives of the final conference

The final conference aims to:

- **Share research outcomes:** The conference will provide a platform to disseminate the findings and insights gathered throughout the VISA RoC project, highlighting the challenges faced by undocumented victims and the strategies developed to promote safe reporting practices.
- **Promote safe reporting practices:** The conference will facilitate discussions on effective strategies for supporting undocumented victims and upholding their rights at the local level, including by exploring the relationship between fundamental rights obligations and migration enforcement.
- **Advocate for policy change:** The ongoing revision of the Victim Rights Directive presents a critical opportunity to strengthen protections for marginalised victims of crime, including undocumented individuals. The conference will serve as a platform for advocacy, urging EU policymakers to prioritize the rights and needs of all victims, regardless of their residence status. By engaging with stakeholders at the European level, we aim to ensure policy decisions uphold justice, protection, and dignity for all.

Participants

The conference brings together EU policy makers, local authorities, civil society organisations, academics.

Draft agenda

- 8:30 – 09:00 **Registration and coffee**
- 09:00 – 9:20 **Opening**
Michele LeVoy, PICUM
Natalia Caicedo, Barcelona University
- 9:20 – 10:30 **Session 1: Experiences on safe reporting at local level**

Moderator
Markus Gonzalez Beilfuss, Barcelona University

Speakers
Main findings of VISA ROC project, Natalia Caicedo, Barcelona University
Patricia Wijntuin, University of Applied Sciences Utrecht (tbc)
Sara Bianca Taverriti, University of Milan (tbc)

Questions and answers
- 10:30 – 10:50 **Coffee break**
- 10:50 – 12:15 **Session 2: Access to justice for undocumented victims: relationship between fundamental rights and migration enforcement**

Moderator
Michele LeVoy, Director, PICUM

Speakers
Privacy rights and safe reporting, Chloe Berthelemy, European Digital Rights
Catherine Delacourt, Head of Sector: Return Policy, European Commission (tbc)
Access to the court for undocumented migrants in Germany, Sarah Lincoln, Gesellschaft für Freiheitsrechte e.V. (tbc)

Questions and answers
- 12:15-13:15 **Lunch**

● 13:15 – 14:30

Session 3: Local strategies

Moderator

Ramon Sanahuja, Barcelona City Council and Member of the Steering Group the City Initiative on Migrants with Irregular Status in Europe

Presentation

Myriam Cherti, City Initiative on Migrants with Irregular Status in Europe guidance for local authorities

Small group discussions

Drawing upon guiding questions, participants will then be invited to share their views on how to improve safe reporting at the local level in small group discussions.

Reporting back

● 14:30 – 15:30

Closing panel: How can we strengthen access to justice for undocumented victims in the future?

Moderator

Jan Braat, Utrecht City and Chair of City Initiative on Migrants with Irregular Status in Europe

Speakers

Javier Zarzalejos, Member of the European Parliament and co-rapporteur on the Victim Rights Directive (tbc)

Katarzyna Janicka-Pawlowska, European Commission coordinator on Victim Rights

Els Keytsman, Belgium member of the Council of Europe European Commission against Racism and Intolerance

Ruben Romero, Fundacion CEPAIM, Spain