



## Blueprint Practical Guide

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2018

# VICTIMS OF ROAD TRAFFIC OFFENCES



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## **Blueprint Practical Guide 2018**

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## INTRODUCTION

A crash can be overwhelming and traumatizing. Many complex questions to different topics can arise. The answers to those questions are often not easy to find and the traumatic nature of the event might make it difficult for someone to go looking for those answers. Consequently, we can say that road victims, (bereaved) relatives, witnesses and people who caused a crash are in need of tools which can give them the necessary information. Also for professionals, such tools can assist them in their support of everyone involved in a crash.

The practical guide of Rondpunt vzw, a centre of expertise for support for everyone involved after a crash, is such an informational tool. 'When traffic hits you' was developed in 2009 and has been used by road victims, (bereaved) relatives and people who caused a crash. In 2017, Rondpunt revised the guide and launched the fifth edition. Throughout 2017, 2290 copies were distributed. This practical guide is the "go to" tool for road victims and professionals to find clear and up-to-date information on every aspect after a road crash. It has been assessed by the users as a very valuable and important tool.

Because of the high appreciation expressed by its users, who see the tool as a good practice, we want to share our expertise with regard to the development of a practical guide. In doing so, we hope to inspire victims associations and support services to develop such a guide for road victims and everyone else involved in a crash in their country. First of all, we will discuss some basic notions that are important to address before developing the guide. We will do this by answering 4 questions: why, who, what and how. Secondly, we will present an overview of the possible content of a practical guide. This overview will be based on our own guide 'When traffic hits you'. It will not contain substantive information, but intends to give a description of what can be discussed by topic.

## How to create a practical guide?

The process of writing a practical guide takes a lot of time and is more complex than it seems to be. Therefore, a thorough preparation is necessary if you want to deliver a good tool. At the preparatory stage, your organisation should answer a couple of essential questions. We present them below and provide some advice on how to answer them aligned to the needs of the users.

### Why?

Before developing the guide, it is important to determine the aim(s) you want to achieve with this practical tool. Deciding which aim(s) you want to achieve, is not always easy.

#### *What can your aim be?*

- Do you want to inform the user?
- Do you want to refer the user to other tools?
- Do you want to refer the user to important services?
- Do you want to advise (tips & tricks) the user?
- Do you want to support the user in clarifying their needs?
- Do you want to guide the user through the aftermath of a road crash?
- ...

The following things can help you with making this decision. First of all, it is interesting to look at other tools which already exist and assess what is missing. Consequently, you can try to complement existing tools with your own practical tool and direct your aim towards that. Secondly, it might be helpful to ask the target group what they need and hope to find in the guide. By organising focus groups or interviews you can collect the necessary information. But you can also find information on the needs of road victims and their relatives in research and literature. For more information, consult our syllabus on the special needs of road victims and their relatives (Castelein & Booms, 2018).

Research can help you determine what your practical guide should aim to do and how it can meet the needs of the target group. Subsequently, the aim(s) will determine the content of the guide. The more aims you put forward, the more content will be necessary. The practical guide will become larger with each aim. If you solely want to inform the user, the content will only brief the reader about the integrated topics. If you also want to refer to other tools or services, information about where to find the tools or how to contact a certain professional needs to be included.

#### **ATTENTION POINT!**

BE CAUTIOUS WITH CHOOSING TOO MANY AIMS. IT IS BETTER TO EFFICIENTLY REACH ONE AIM WITH THE GUIDE, THAN TO PURSUE DIFFERENT AIMS WITHOUT REALLY REACHING THEM.

## Our advice

The needs of our target group are the foundation of our practical guide. They should determine why a practical tool is being developed and what it aims to do. So, we held focus groups and continuously try to stay aware of possible changes in their needs. We also show interest in their experience with the guide once it has been developed. We advise you to get in touch with people who might use your tool to discuss what they need. We also want to share one very important advice from our target group: do not keep developing practical tools. Many tools already exist and it is a maze to go through. Road victims and relatives are appreciative of the efforts, but first want us to research if a tool already exists before developing another one. A practical tool can be useful, because it does not already exist.

## Who?

As mentioned above, it is advisable to look at the needs of the future users when developing a practical guide. Consequently, you should determine for whom you are developing the tool. In case of a road crash, many people are affected by what happens. Often, they are divided in people directly and people indirectly involved in the crash and its consequences.

### *Directly involved*

- Road victims
- People who caused a crash

### *Indirectly involved*

- (Bereaved) relatives
- Friends
- Co-workers or fellow students
- Witnesses
- Professionals
- Society

Every single involved person has his/her own questions and own needs. During our research in the European project 'Victims of road traffic offences', we found that every trajectory is unique and the needs for information and support can differ between road victims and relatives. Certain topics require more attention than others. Some topics are not relevant for one group, while very important for the other. For instance, information on medical and reintegration aspects is very important for injured road victims, but not necessarily or in the same way as for bereaved relatives. We also found that bereaved relatives have a higher need for information regarding contact with the media. Although this information is important for both road victims as bereaved relatives, special attention for this need amongst the latter might be necessary.

When you look at the other involved parties, you will find other questions on which they need information. Friends, co-workers or fellow students might want to know more about what they can do to support or help road victims. Witnesses might then for instance need information on what to do with what they saw and how it can affect them psychosocially. Subsequently, this shows that the kind of information that will be integrated in the guide depends on the target group.

Furthermore, the participants in our research stated that they experienced a lack of knowledge amongst professionals on different topics that are relevant in the trajectory of road victims and relatives. It might therefore be important to also think about the many professionals victims and relatives encounter and how a guide can also help them to improve their support. It is known that the more professionals know about a topic, the more they might act on it. So, improving their knowledge can definitely help everyone involved in a crash in the long run.

When you choose to provide information to different groups, you can deliver this in two possible ways.

1. A guide per group (road victim, bereaved relative, relative, witness,...)
2. One guide in which all groups are included

Both of the options have their advantages and disadvantages. A guide per group allows you to only deliver the specifically needed information and to develop smaller guides. The target group will not have to browse through a guide with information they do not need. Nonetheless, one guide in which all groups are included offers the possibility that the guide can be used by different people at once. When a person uses the guide, (s)he can pass it on to others who are also involved in a crash. E.g.: a road victim can pass it on to their family members and friends. Furthermore, it is possible that one person might need information from different 'groups'. E.g.: someone can be involved as a victim and have lost a relative in the same crash. With one guide for all groups, that person receives the information (s)he might need as a victim and as a bereaved relative by using one practical tool. While (s)he might need two guides in the first option to answer the questions.

### ATTENTION POINT!

IF YOU CHOOSE DIFFERENT GROUPS AS USERS OF YOUR GUIDE, YOU WILL HAVE TO OFFER SPECIFIC INFORMATION FOR EACH TARGET GROUP. THEREFORE, THE MORE TARGET GROUPS YOU INCLUDE, THE LARGER YOUR PRACTICAL GUIDE WILL BECOME.

### Our advice

We opted for a guide in which all groups are included. The fact that the guide can be passed on and it can answer the needs of a person that is part of different groups, is more practical and handier than offering different guides. Furthermore, it is strategically better to include all groups when you want to improve the knowledge of professionals with the guide. One 'book' with all the necessary information is more

desirable for them. In addition, it can be positive in enabling the distribution. If you want professionals to help with distributing the guide, they only need to bring one guide with them and can immediately help different people.

If you also want to opt for one guide, make sure that your guide is structured in a good way. Make a distinction between the different groups and use this as a way to create your guide (e.g. separate chapters per group). So, a 'group' is immediately aware of and directed towards the information that is relevant for them. Adding a keyword list at the end of your guide can also be helpful.

## What?

After defining the aim and the target group, it already becomes more clear which kind of information you will need for your guide. The content should now be further determined by the needs of your target group. The information, that road victims and their relatives need, can be divided in several topics.

We therefore advise you to start with a provisional table of content. First of all, start with determining general topics. These topics can be linked to the different professional fields your target group encounters or the different areas of life (leisure, work, relationships, living situation,...). Secondly, specify on which issues within these topics they might need information. Thirdly, determine whether or not the content is aligned with the needs of your target group.

### *How can you align the content to the needs of the target group?*

1. Think about questions that you have already encountered during your support of road victims and relatives.
2. Draw up a possible trajectory of a road victim or relative and ask yourself which questions you might have at every 'stage'. By doing this, you are putting yourself in the shoes of your target group.
3. Ask about the informational need during immediate contact with your target group (e.g. interview, focus group,...). They are the ones who truly experienced what happened and can give valuable advice for your guide. Some topics seem less relevant to you or might be forgotten. By asking for that advice, you make sure that you know which topics are relevant and avoid forgetting certain issues.

We, for instance, learned even more about their needs during the research stage of our EU project 'Victims of road traffic offences'.<sup>1</sup> We found that the following topics are important for road victims: insurance, judicial, medical, reintegration, psychosocial issues and contact with the press. Information on insurance and judicial aspects is definitely very important and necessary. These issues are often complex, unfamiliar and as a result not easy to find

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the needs of both road victims and bereaved relatives, you can read our document on Frequently Asked Questions and the syllabus on the special needs.



answers to.

### **ATTENTION POINT!**

ROAD VICTIMS AND THEIR (BEREAVED) RELATIVES EXPRESSED THAT INFORMATION IS OFTEN DELIVERED IN A TECHNICAL MANNER WHICH IS DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO UNDERSTAND. THEREFORE, YOU SHOULD 'TRANSLATE' THE TECHNICAL INFORMATION. E.G.: PROCEDURES ON RESOURCES FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY AND JUDICIAL AND INSURANCE ASPECTS NEED 'TRANSLATION'. WHEN YOU INTEGRATE THESE ASPECTS IN YOUR GUIDE, IT IS ADVISABLE TO PAY ATTENTION TO HOW YOU ARE DELIVERING THE INFORMATION.

Besides information on insurance and judicial aspects, road victims have high needs on information about psychosocial issues and support. Consequently, when you integrate these three topics in your guide, you will definitely cover the three most important issues for road victims. This is also the case for bereaved relatives. But be aware that other target groups might be in need of other information. We found for instance that bereaved relatives have a higher need to know more about contact with the media than road victims. For both of them, this topic is relevant to get information about. But bereaved relatives ask more and often different questions about it. E.g.: about the use of a Facebook picture of their loved one by the media.

### **ATTENTION POINT!**

WHEN YOU HAVE SELECTED THE TOPICS, YOU STILL NEED TO DECIDE WHAT YOU WILL DISCUSS SPECIFICALLY. KEEP IN MIND THAT TOO MUCH INFORMATION IS NOT ALWAYS THE RIGHT WAY TO GO. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO DELIVER A GUIDE WITH ALL THE DETAILED INFORMATION. THE GUIDE WOULD GET TOO EXTENSIVE AND TOO MUCH TO TAKE ON FOR THE TARGET GROUP. SO, A BALANCE BETWEEN INFORMATION THAT IS SUFFICIENT AND CONCISE IS ESSENTIAL.

YOU CAN ACHIEVE THIS BALANCE BY SELECTING THE ESSENTIAL INFORMATION AND REFERING TO E.G. UP-TO-DATE WEBSITES FOR MORE ELABORATE INFORMATION. IN THIS WAY, YOU ALSO ENSURE THE DURABILITY OF YOUR GUIDE. UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND ON THE WEBSITES WITHOUT YOU CONSTANTLY HAVING TO CHANGE THE CONTENT OF YOUR GUIDE. NONETHELESS, WHEN TOO MUCH INFORMATION HAS CHANGED, YOU SHOULD CONSIDER REWRITING YOUR GUIDE.

We have also discovered that professionals do not always discuss contact with the other involved party (or restorative justice) as a topic (due to lack of knowledge, omission or avoidance of the topic). But we have often heard that road victims and bereaved relatives feel the need to know more about or talk with the other party, but do not know how to do it or where to go to for support. This example shows that this topic might be relevant to integrate in your guide.

## ATTENTION POINT!

ROAD VICTIMS AND THEIR RELATIVES DO NOT ALWAYS KNOW WHICH SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE. THEY OFTEN NEED TO SEARCH FOR INFORMATION THEMSELVES WHICH TAKES A LOT OF ENERGY AND AGGRAVATES THEIR EMOTIONAL COPING OF WHAT HAPPENED. IT LEAVES THEM WITH THE FEELING THAT THEY DID NOT GET THE HELP THEY NEED OR DESERVE. PROFESSIONALS SHOULD BE PROACTIVE IN INFORMING THEM. IN OTHER WORDS, PROFESSIONALS SHOULD INFORM VICTIMS ACTIVELY ABOUT THE AVAILABLE SUPPORT SERVICES WITHOUT THE LATTER HAVING TO ASK FOR IT.

The previous example also shows us the need to improve the knowledge of professionals. This might be important to take into account as well, when determining the content. When you want to include relevant information for professionals, you can mention information about other existing support, specific needs of the target group, Acquired Brain Injury, the importance of attention for relatives of road victims,... These are a couple of topics on which road victims and relatives found that the knowledge of professionals needs to be improved.

## ATTENTION POINT!

THE TRAJECTORY OF ROAD TRAFFIC VICTIMS IS FILLED WITH COMPLEX HELP QUESTIONS. CONSEQUENTLY, THEY NEED SUPPORT FROM DIFFERENT PROFESSIONALS FROM DIFFERENT SECTORS/SERVICES TO FIND THE ANSWERS. THINK ABOUT HOW THE GUIDE CAN HELP THEM IN FINDING THOSE PROFESSIONALS, BUT ALSO HOW IT CAN HELP PROFESSIONALS TO FIND EACH OTHER. ADDING CONTACT INFORMATION ABOUT THE DIFFERENT SERVICES IS IMPORTANT.

### Our advice

The trajectory of road victims and bereaved relatives is diverse and complex. From psychosocial to judicial, insurance, hospital, reintegration,... matters. These different issues are often interrelated. Based on our findings, we advise to pay attention to all those issues. Each of them can be important at one time or another in a trajectory. In addition, it illustrates the complex and diverse trajectory to professionals and, hopefully, make them aware that they should talk about the different topics with road victims and their relatives.

Furthermore, covering all the issues might lead to helping different people at the same time with one guide. We found that every trajectory is unique and each person involved in a crash might need different information. Certain information might not be relevant at a certain point in the trajectory, but might become relevant later on. Subsequently, a guide on different topics might be helpful at different times. It also simplifies the search for information. They do not need to look for another guide on another topic. They can save some energy and take the same guide they used before. And with that, the guide also meets the need of road victims and their relatives to centralise existing information.

## How?

When you have determined the aim, the target group and the content of the guide, you can start writing it. Writing the guide can be done in different stages. Each stage needs to be planned carefully and enough time needs to be allocated. Therefore, we recommend to compose a time schedule in which each stage is represented.

### 1. Read existing material and select useful information

It might be possible to write the practical guide based on the knowledge and expertise that exists within your organisation. Nonetheless, it is advisable to search for interesting existing material. It can show you what else is available and, maybe, even update or improve your own knowledge. You can find information on specific topics in other practical guides, booklets, informational brochures, websites,... When you use other existing material, you should refer to them in a proper way. This way, the reader can consult other reliable and available information if (s)he wants to know more about a certain topic. And additionally, referring to the used material, makes your guide look more professional and reliable.

### 2. Combine the useful information with knowledge from an expert within your organisation

An expert within your organisation can write the content or one person can write the whole guide and ask the internal experts to re-read it. The advantage of including an internal expert is that (s)he can help with translating technical vocabulary in an understandable way which is still correct in substance.

### 3. Send the draft version to (an) external professional(s) or organisation(s) for a read-through

It is always relevant to include external professionals or organisations in the development of your guide. The content of the guide will only gain more accuracy and credibility. And in doing so, you also recognise the value of these professionals or organisations and it offers the possibility to work on or strengthen cooperation with them. Furthermore, the involved professionals or organisation might also be able to help with the distribution of the guide and might use it themselves. Consequently, it is important to think about contacting professionals or organisations with specific expertise which also support the target group in the field. E.g. you can send the part about coping with the crash to a victim support worker or psychologist.

### 4. Adjust the draft version

After collecting feedback from different experts, you can start with adjusting the draft version. You can choose to appoint different people from your organisation to each adapt one or a couple of chapters. Or one person can adjust the whole guide.

5. Appoint a person within the organisation to read through the entire guide and to finalise it

If you decide to appoint different colleagues to adjust the draft version, it is important to also appoint someone who has the final responsibility. This person will rely on the colleagues for the accuracy of the content but will have to read the guide on possible linguistic errors and make the guide ready to be published. If only one person will adjust the whole guide, it is still important that another person helps with the read through regarding e.g. linguistic errors.

### **ATTENTION POINT!**

KEEP YOUR GUIDE UP-TO-DATE! WHEN YOU WANT YOUR GUIDE TO HAVE A GOOD REPUTATION AMONGST PROFESSIONALS AND SELF-HELP ORGANISATIONS, IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP ON WORKING ON THE CONTENT OF THE GUIDE. DEVELOP A NEW EDITION WHEN A LOT OF ESSENTIAL INFORMATION HAS CHANGED. WHEN YOU WORK ON A NEW EDITION, YOU CAN ASK EXPERTS ONCE AGAIN TO READ TOPICS RELATED TO THEIR EXPERTISE. CONSEQUENTLY, YOU ARE MAKING SURE THAT ALL THE INFORMATION WILL BE REVIEWED.

MAKE SURE THAT THE TARGET GROUP AND THE PROFESSIONALS ARE AWARE OF THE NEW EDITION! IT IS ADVISABLE TO EXPLAIN THEM WHY A NEW EDITION HAS BEEN MADE (E.G.: TOO MANY CHANGES IN LEGISLATION, SUPPORT,...).

At the writing stage, you should also determine the format in which you want to publish your guide. You can publish the guide on paper, digitally, online or in audio format. You can choose one format or combine different formats. Each format has its advantages and disadvantages, which will be discussed in the overview below.

Advantage	Disadvantage
<b>On paper</b>	
Easier to read than on a screen	A new print is needed after every update of the guide
Not everyone has a computer or internet	Less control over the old editions that are circulating
Possible to work in the guide (using high-lights, taking own notes at the side,...)	
<b>Digitally</b>	
Easier to adjust	Not everyone has a computer or internet
Can be delivered cost-free and fast	Not easy to read on a screen
Search function on a computer facilitates the search of the user for specific information	Up-to-date edition needs to be resend
Can easily be forwarded by the user to another person that wants information	
Links to webpages can be included in the guide (to refer the user to other existing information or important services)	
<b>Online</b>	
Easier to adjust	Not everyone has a computer or internet
Control over the up-to-date edition (when available on your own webpage)	Not easy to read on a screen
Can be found much easier by the target group	
Can be delivered fast (and cost-free when you already have a webpage)	
Search function on the computer facilitates the search of the user for specific information	
Can easily be forwarded by a user to another person who wants information	
Links to other webpages can be included in the guide (to refer the user to other existing information or important services)	
<b>Audio</b>	
Listening to information can help with remembering it better	A lot of work to develop
Makes it more personal	Not easy when someone wants to look up information quickly
Helps people who are not able to read information	

## ATTENTION POINT!

THE WAY INFORMATION IS DELIVERED IS VERY IMPORTANT. INFORMATION IS OFTEN GIVEN VERBALLY. HOWEVER, ROAD VICTIMS AND RELATIVES OFTEN TOLD US THAT THEY DO NOT ALWAYS REMEMBER WHAT HAS BEEN SAID TO THEM. DELIVERING INFORMATION IN DIFFERENT AND COMPLEMENTARY WAYS IS NECESSARY. SO, THEY CAN CONSULT IT ON THEIR OWN AT ANOTHER TIME.

### Our advice

A practical guide has a true value when it is perceived as a go-to tool and something that is indispensable in the trajectory of your target group. The way you develop, deliver and distribute your guide can contribute to this value. We found that it is most valuable when you keep your guide up-to-date and experts were involved in its development. You can ask experts to write a part of the guide or you can write it and let them review the part which discusses their topic(s) of expertise.

We opt for the last one. The content can be more directed towards what you want it to say and you have more control over it. Also, this option might make it easier to find external professionals to agree on helping with the guide. It takes less time to review a text than to write it from scratch.

Moreover, we advise you to deliver the guide in different ways. Different possible formats are highly appreciated by the target group. They can choose the format they find most pleasant and practical. Besides this advantage, different formats can also facilitate the distribution. Our guide is available online on our website and can be downloaded in a pdf-file. Furthermore, we also have a printed version that can be ordered and delivered for free. Although the printed version is still the most known, because we started with this format, the other formats are gaining more and more exposure.

## An example of a practical guide

In this part of the blueprint, we present an overview of the practical guide 'When traffic hits you', developed by Rondpunt vzw. This overview provides an insight into the structure of the guide and summarises the integrated information. First of all, the table of content will be presented. Secondly, we shortly discuss what is written down in each chapter of the guide.

### Table of content

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### Foreword

The practical guide starts with a foreword in which we discuss the aim and target group of the guide. Furthermore, we thank everyone who helped developing the guide, especially experts and other partners who were included in the writing process. At the end of our foreword, we encourage the user to share their experience or opinion about the guide.

### Instructions

In the 'instructions' we explain how the guide is structured and how the user can read it. The importance of the different chapters of the guide are outlined, such as the glossary (= to explain technical and professional vocabulary), keyword list (= to sum up where you can find information on a certain topic),... We also justify why information is written down in a certain way. E.g. why we generalise and objectify information. We also explain that we use 'you' to refer to injured victims, bereaved relatives, people who caused a crash, friends, co-workers and family and that we use 'he' for the readability of the guide when we mean 'he or she'.

## 1. What happens immediately after a crash?

The first chapter of the guide gives an overview of general aspects that are important to know immediately after a crash. We start with a summary of the people who should be contacted and informed (e.g. people close to you, social health services, insurance company, employer, school, general practitioner,...) and within which timeframe. We also explain why these people should be contacted and how they can help after a crash. After that, we inform the reader about the documents that are important to collect and keep copies from (e.g. invoices of the hospitalisation, names and contact information of professionals,...). In this regard, we also provide information on documents that are important to fill in and the respective procedures (e.g.: European Accident Statement, document about unfit for work, reimbursement of medical costs,...).

## 2. The role of the police?

The chapter 'The role of the police' is divided into two sections: one about their role at the scene of the crash and the other about their support.

### 'At the scene'

We discuss the tasks the police carry out when they arrive at the scene. For example: providing first aid, notifying the prosecutor about serious crashes, directing the traffic, keeping by-standers at a distance, looking for witnesses and guarding the scene, investigating what has happened, collecting information of everyone involved, informing an undertaker to transport deceased victims,... Some of the mentioned actions are explained in detail (e.g. how do they investigate, where do they gather their findings, what happens with the investigation,...).

### 'Support by the police'

This section provides information about the way the police should support victims. In Belgium, two specific tasks are distinguished and assigned to the police by law: 'considerate and victim-oriented support' and 'bad news notifications'. Both tasks are explained in this section. We also explain the difficulties the police might experience in carrying out those tasks, for instance why it might take longer than expected to be notified about the passing away of a loved one. This kind of information might help to restore the relationship with the police.

## 3. The role of the judicial entities/organisations?

'The role of the judicial entities/organisations?' includes information about eight different topics: 'Possible judicial procedures', 'Specific statute of aggrieved person', 'Civil action', 'Procedure at court', 'The costs', 'Victims support from judicial entities' and 'Hit-and-run'. The specific vocabulary and different steps in the procedures are explained in a thorough but simplified manner. The latter is crucial since people are often not familiar with these aspects and find it difficult to understand the technical subject matter. Furthermore, we also mention the importance of support from a lawyer and how the length of judicial procedures



can be hard to endure or can be a burden.

### 'Possible judicial procedures'

Belgian law prescribes two procedures: a criminal investigation initiated by the public prosecutor and an inquiry by an investigating judge. Both procedures are explained in this section. We discuss which professionals are involved, when and why they are involved, what their specific tasks and jurisdictions are, which steps they can take and which decisions they can make. The position of road victims and relatives towards these professionals (e.g. what they can ask them to do) is described in this part as well.

### 'Specific statute of aggrieved person'

Victims and relatives in Belgium can register as an 'aggrieved person' in a judicial procedure. We explain what this statute entails and how someone can obtain it. This section can be replaced with the rights and the role a victim has in the judicial proceedings of the country in which the guide will be used.

### 'Civil action'

First of all, we explain what a 'civil action' means and which rights it grants to those involved. Secondly, we describe the different ways in which someone can submit a 'civil action' by explaining what they should do and what they need. Finally, advice is given on becoming a civil party in judicial procedure.

### 'Procedure at court'

The different court proceedings are explained by describing the different courts and when which court will be involved. The possible consequences for the person who caused a crash are also addressed. We describe what this means for victims and bereaved relatives.

### 'The costs'

We describe the possible costs (attorney's fees, procedural costs,...), what they contain and who will have to pay them. This section also provides information on support possibilities to pay certain costs. E.g.: pro bono system.

### 'Victim support from judicial entities'

In Belgium, the judicial entities offer a kind of victim support (next to the support granted by victim organisations and the police). We explain what this support entails and where it can be found.

### 'Hit-and-run'

'Hit-and-run' has become a very important topic in Belgium because of its high occurrence. The legal definition is explained in this section, as well as the judicial consequences and

punishments. We also discuss how it affects victims and relatives.

#### 4. You are a witness of a crash

Rondpunt has received a lot of help questions from witnesses over the last years. Because they are also affected by the crash that they have witnessed and did not know where to find information or help, we found it essential to devote a chapter to this target group. Therefore, this chapter was added to the last edition of the practical guide.

##### 'Coping process of a witness'

We discuss how a witness can cope with what they saw. The possible feelings (e.g. fear, helplessness, anger or anxiety) are explained and described as normal feelings as part of a coping process. We also give information and advice on what to do with their concerns about the well-being of the victims and where to find support.

##### 'The role of a witness in a judicial case file'

We emphasise the importance of staying at the scene of the crash, so when the police arrives, the latter can identify who was a witness. When a witness did not stay at the scene until the police arrived or realised that he has forgotten to tell certain things to the police, we advise him to get in touch with the local police themselves. The importance of their information in understanding what has happened is stressed in this part. Finally, we discuss what happens with the statement of a witness.

#### 5. You are injured after a crash

The different sections in this chapter are 'at the hospital', 'rehabilitation' and 'a brain injury after a crash'. We, however, start the chapter with explaining who makes the decision to transport a victim to a certain hospital and on which grounds (e.g. due to the medical condition, specialisation of hospital,...). The fact that different victims of the same crash can end up in different hospitals is thereby mentioned and explained.

##### 'The hospital'

This section discusses what an injured victim can expect when he arrives and stays at a hospital. Firstly, we explain the administrative aspects of an admission at the Emergency Department (E.D.) and how the E.D. and a hospital works (e.g. which professionals are involved, the different units at a hospital,...).

Secondly, we describe what a patient can expect during his hospital stay. The possible psychosocial support and the patient rights are discussed. With regard to the rights, we discuss the Belgian law 'Rights of a patient'. It is important to inform the users of the guide about it, because people often do not know what their rights are as a patient.

Thirdly, we integrate information for relatives and what they can expect during the hospitalisation of a loved-one. Who and how a relative will be informed about the medical

condition and treatment of their loved one is discussed. In this regard, we explicitly advise relatives to ask all the questions they might have, in order to gain a little bit of control over a difficult situation. Information about possible support (professional and peers) for relatives is given in the next part of this section.

Lastly, we discuss what might happen when doctors cannot help a loved one anymore. Topics as ending life support, organ donation,... are mentioned.

### 'Rehabilitation'

The second section of this chapter provides information on the different kind of rehabilitation programs (ambulatory or residential) and rehabilitation facilities. Furthermore, we advise the reader to visit a rehabilitation facility to better understand their way of working and what rehabilitation might look like. The importance of contacting the insurance before starting a program in a certain facility, with regard to financial interventions, is also mentioned.

### 'A brain injury after a crash'

We begin the third section with explaining what a coma entails, what family and friends can do and what the possible consequences might be when someone wakes up from a coma. Following this explanation, we discuss a specific injury, namely a traumatic brain injury, and its most common consequences. In this regard, we emphasise that every person with a brain injury reacts in his own and unique way which makes it almost impossible to compare patients to each other. The impact a traumatic brain injury has on the life of people with such an injury and their environment is also being discussed (e.g. long recovery and rehabilitation, invisible consequences,...).

## 6. You have lost a loved one

This chapter consists of six different sections, which will be discussed below. In the introduction of this chapter, we describe the experience of bereaved relatives shortly after the crash (e.g.: not being able to remember the first hours or days, acting on autopilot,...).

### 'Saying goodbye'

Firstly, we address the possibility that a loved one died at the location of the crash and an undertaker is contacted to transfer the body to the morgue. We also discuss what happens when a loved one dies at the hospital and the relatives want to say goodbye to him. Saying goodbye to the deceased is a personal choice. But in this regard, we ask to pay extra attention to children and their desire to say goodbye, because this is often forgotten or the decision is made for them. Secondly, we explain what happens to the body of a deceased person before and after the judicial authorities release the body.

### 'Organ and body donation'

We start this section with explaining the existing legislation on organ donation and how it

is implemented in practice. After this explanation, we discuss how difficult it is for a family member to answer a question about organ donation and how personal the decision is. This section finishes with the difference between organ and body donation and the consequences a body donation has on the memorial service and burial/cremation.

### 'Burial or cremation'

The next question that family members will have to answer, is whether they want a burial or a cremation. We refer to the will or legacy of the deceased, which might describe his wishes in this regard. Furthermore, we offer information about the request for cremation and the practical aspects of the organisation of the burial.

### 'Memorial or funeral service'

The different choices with regard to a memorial or funeral service are being discussed in this section. We also mention the importance of including children in the service and its preparation. It can be meaningful for their mourning process to participate. We conclude this section with advice on asking for support concerning important (financial) decisions in the first days after the death of a loved one, on keeping invoices of the costs that are made and on asking the undertaker for a quotation.

### 'Who should be notified?'

We start by advising the bereaved relatives to make a list of everyone he has notified and to copy all documents. Afterwards, we divided this section in two parts. In the first part, we sum up who should be notified immediately and which documents they might need. For instance: the undertaker, the civil registry authority, insurance company, bank, employer, school,... In the second part of this section, we describe the arrangements after the funeral concerning social health security, life insurance, other insurances, survivor's pension, registration of motor vehicle of the deceased, taxes, subscriptions, child support and custody, bank deposits and specific aspects when the deceased was a self-employed person.

### 'Legacy and will'

In this section we explain the procedures concerning the declaration of the legacy and inheritance taxes. The following part handles the will of the deceased and the proceeding to compose a will. We end the section by outlining the existing legislation on inheritance and, in doing so, answering the question whether or not someone is obliged to accept an inheritance.

## 7. Insurance and the damages

Regarding the topic 'Insurance and the damages', we decided to divide the chapter in the following sections: 'The basic rules', 'Different kind of damages' and 'Compensation for the suffered damages'. At the beginning of the chapter we advise the user of the guide to ask for assistance from their insurance intermediary of their third-party liability insurance, and if available, their legal assistance insurance.

## 'The basic rules'

We explain the major aspects and technical vocabulary that occur in the aftermath of a crash in the area of insurance and the implications, such as 'civil liability', 'vulnerable road users' and 'work-related accident'. Furthermore, we discuss what will happen after a crash where no one else is involved or liable. This section is concluded with an explanation about the involvement of health insurance and social security in dealing with the medical cost after the crash.

## 'Different kind of damages'

Three types of damages are separately discussed: physical damage, damages sustained in the event of death and material damage. This distinction and the subsequent explanation is based on a Belgian 'indicative table'. This table is a guide which is often used by insurance companies and judges to estimate the right compensation for the incurred damages or losses. This practice is different from country to country and should therefore be adapted to the situation of the country in which the guide will be used. Find out which interpretation is used in the legislation or jurisdiction of the concerned country and inform the reader about it in this part. But also discuss the role of medical experts and whether it is important to choose one yourself. Furthermore, this section is completed with advice on how to prove the damage and the importance of copying invoices and keeping all relevant documents.

## 'Compensation for the suffered damages'

In this part we discuss how someone can receive compensation and we structure the information based on who will pay the compensation. First of all, the legal assistance insurance is discussed, more specifically why it is necessary and what it does. Secondly, third-party liability insurance is explained and what to do when the person who caused the crash is not known or insured. Thirdly, we mention the insurance with regard to work-related incidents and which compensation someone can receive from this insurance. Fourthly, the possibility that the liable person has to pay for the compensation himself is addressed. Finally, a personal accident insurance and its applicability is explained.

## **8. You are permanently injured**

This chapter offers information on life after the crash and the long rehabilitation period for permanently injured road victims. There are 5 different sections: 'Social security', 'Care and support', 'Back to work', 'Back on the road' and 'Leisure activities'.

### 'Social security'

The Belgian social security system and where someone can find help with regard to complex administrative procedures, is explained briefly. The other topics on which we give information are the substitute income and the different kind of social benefits. On each topic, we provide a view on the procedures and explain difficult terminology.

## 'Care and support'

In this section we discuss the different kind of care and support that exist after rehabilitation and where to apply for it. How it is organised and paid for, is explained as well. Because of the elaborated procedures, we combine the information with referrals to websites and organisations that offer additional information.

## 'Back to work'

Returning to the workplace after a serious crash might not be easy. Therefore, we discuss the support on reintegration in the labour market. The first section addresses the return to the previous employer. Looking for a new job is covered in the second section. Finally, in the third section, we discuss the possibility that someone might not be able to return to the regular labour market and the alternatives. In each section, we mention what road victims themselves can do and where they can find help or support measures.

## 'Back on the road'

A road crash can also have consequences on the participation in traffic. We discuss the fitness to drive and the existing support when someone wants to start driving again. The alternative forms of transport are also being described.

## 'Leisure activities'

This section is directed towards people who come back home from a stay in a rehabilitation centre. The consequences with regard to leisure time and activities and where to find advice and support are discussed. Furthermore, the possibilities for people with a disability to practise sport, to go to culture events and to travel are described.

## 9. Children and youngsters

In this chapter we discuss how children and youngsters who are involved in a crash as a victim or bereaved relative can be supported. There are 6 different sections: 'The experience of children', 'The experience of youngsters', 'Brother, sister or child of a deceased victim', 'Long-term care', 'School' and 'Leisure activities'.

### 'The experience of children'

This section starts with clarifying that children do not react the same way as adults do. How they react, how they cope with a traumatic event and why they react in that way is explained in this part of the guide. Subsequently, advice and tips for loved ones are presented. We end this section with information on stress disorders amongst children after a crash, more specifically which kind of disorders occur, the consequences and treatment.

### 'The experience of youngsters'

The importance of contact with peers and the preservation of these contacts is highlighted

in this section. Once again, advice and tips for loved ones are presented, but now specifically with regard to the coping process of a youngster.

### 'Brother, sister or child of a deceased victim'

We start this section with advising loved ones to explain and talk to children and youngsters about death and funeral services. To support them in their conversation with a child or youngster, we inform them about the level of understanding that different age groups have towards the concept of being dead. The section is concluded with information about the mourning process of children or youngsters and the related support.

### 'Long-term care'

It is possible that a child needs to stay in the hospital or rehabilitation centre for a long period of time. Therefore, we give advice to parents on what they can do when this happens. For instance with regard to informing the school, friends and family. But also how to include other children who were not involved in the crash and feel the need to be involved in the recovery of a parent, brother, sister or friend.

### 'School'

This section describes the different forms of education for hospitalised or recovering children and youngsters. We start with education during hospitalisation and rehabilitation and explain how this works. After this part, we discuss what to do when a child or youngster goes back to a regular school after rehabilitation and where to find support on this matter. We continue the section with information on education for people with a disability who cannot return to a regular school. Following this kind of education, we also describe home schooling. We end this section with the possibility that a child or youngster cannot follow any education in any form possible and how to be exempted from compulsory education.

### 'Leisure activities'

We discuss that possibility that a child or youngster cannot resume the previous leisure activities and refer to the previous chapter in which leisure activities for people with a disability are being discussed. This section is concluded by the need of brothers, sisters and other family members to take a breath and to spend time away from the care for the injured victim.

## 10. To cope with what has happened

The five sections in this chapter are 'The emotional shock', 'What does coping mean?', 'Stress reactions and posttraumatic stress disorder', 'Helping a loved one' and 'You don't have to go through it alone'.

### 'The emotional shock'

We describe what an emotional shock looks and feels like. Examples are given, such as

trying to understand what has happened, avoiding thoughts about the crash, reliving the crash, feeling numb/anxious/powerless, experiencing physical or attention difficulties,...

### 'What does coping mean?'

In this section we discuss what is meant by the word 'coping', namely a process in which someone tries to understand what has happened and looks for a new balance in life. Furthermore, the individual differences that might occur in a coping process are described. We also focus on the reasons why coping processes can differ. This section is concluded with advice for everyone who goes through a coping process after a crash.

### 'Stress reactions and posttraumatic stress disorder'

The consequences of a traumatic event on a psychological level are presented, together with the definitions of a stress reaction and of a posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). With regard to PTSD, we also explain the symptoms and what to do when someone recognises these symptoms.

### 'Helping a loved one'

In this section we offer partners, parents, brothers, sisters, friends,... information and advice on how they can be there for the victim.

### 'You don't have to go through it alone'

We discuss possible professional help and when it might be advisable to call upon it. Following this information, we summarise where someone can find professional help (name of the organisation, and the kind of support they offer). We also add information with regard to self-help and peer support groups.

## 11. Talking with the media/press

In the chapter on talking with the media/press, we give information on the following topics: 'Giving an interview', 'Social media', 'Complaints'.

### 'Giving an interview'

Because road victims and (bereaved) relatives are often contacted by the press, we explain what is important when they give an interview. We start off with stressing that everyone should decide for themselves whether or not they want to talk to the press. The positive and negative consequences are additionally discussed. We end this section with advice and points to pay attention to when someone agrees to give an interview.

### 'Social media'

In this section we warn road victims and their relatives for journalists who might use information and photographs they find on online accounts (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, In-



stagram,...). We advise them to protect their online profile pages and change their privacy settings. With regard to online profile pages of deceased victims, we mention the possibility to change it to a memorial page or to delete the page.

### 'Complaints'

When someone has complaints about the media coverage of the crash, we offer information in this section on how and where someone can file a complaint. Furthermore, the procedure after a complaint is submitted and the possible sanctions are described. We also explain the ethical code for journalists in our country.

## 12. The person who caused a crash

As a centre of expertise, we support all the involved parties, which also includes people who caused a crash. Our vision is that no one wants to be involved in a collision. Some people take high risks when driving and they should be held accountable for that behaviour. But even in these cases, they are entitled to information and support. Therefore, we offer information for this party on the following topics: 'Dealing with what has happened', 'Waiting for trial', 'Juridical procedures', 'The insurance company'.

### 'Dealing with what has happened'

We describe what a person might feel when being responsible for causing a crash. The importance of taking responsibility for what has happened is emphasised. We also discuss the possibility to contact the other involved party and why this might be a good idea or not. Consequently, we describe how someone can contact the other party and where the person who caused the crash can find help (e.g. restorative justice service which offers victim-offender mediation). Not only with regard to contacting the other party, but also with regard to emotional support in dealing with the crash.

### 'Waiting for trial'

The importance of the post-crash investigation is discussed in this section. In the meantime, when this investigation is taking place, all the parties are waiting for the trial. The person who caused the crash is waiting on what will happen to him. We describe how it feels to live in uncertainty and where to find support.

### 'Juridical procedures'

We explain the different juridical procedures that might occur after a crash. The importance of being present during trial and the role of the insurance companies during juridical procedures are described.

### 'The insurance company'

In the last section of this chapter, the way a 'third-party insurance' works, is presented. More specifically, we address the possibility that an insurance company might initiate a re-

course proceeding when the insured person did not comply with the contract. With regard to this topic, we advise to read the insurance policy.

### **13. Glossary**

In the glossary the reader can find the clarification of terms that are used in the guide. The terms that are explained in this chapter are marked with an asterisk (\*) in the guide.

### **14. Keyword list**

The pages in which a certain word is used, are presented in this chapter.

### **15. Useful contact info**

We sum up all the important services with their contact information. The list is structured by the different professional fields, but also by the relevance of an organisation according to the target groups.

### **16. Consulted information sources and webpages**

The content of the practical guide is composed by the expertise of professionals and our own knowledge. Nonetheless, a lot of material (books, research, webpages, legislation,...) were used as well. In this chapter we present which information sources and webpages were consulted.

## CONCLUSION

A practical guide can be an important 'go-to' tool for its users. We want to encourage victim associations and support services to develop such a tool for everyone involved in a crash. Throughout this blueprint, we describe the development process by putting forward four important questions: Why are you developing a guide? For who? What will be the content of your guide? And how will you write and publish the guide? Each question is approached and answered based on the expertise within Rondpunt. In addition, we offer advice and points to pay attention to during the entire blueprint. We hope that this blueprint will assist victim associations and support services in developing a practical guide of their own.

In general, we advise victim associations and support services to develop one guide for all the parties involved in a crash in which different important topics are discussed. Road victims, (bereaved) relatives, witnesses and people who caused a crash are in need of clear and up-to-date information on every aspect after a road crash. Furthermore, the practical guide should be composed of own knowledge, research and other information sources in combination with the expertise of professionals from the field. Finally, when the practical tool is made available in different formats, it has more chance reaching those in need.

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Project partners

**Moderator vzw, Forum for restorative justice and mediation  
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Rondpunt vzw, Centre of expertise and ally after a road traffic crash**

Associate partners

**Victim Support Europe  
European Federation of Road Traffic Victims  
European Forum for Restorative Justice**

**Information on the project: [www.rondpunt.be](http://www.rondpunt.be)**

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**moderator**  
forum voor herstelrecht en bemiddeling



**ROND PUNT**  
JE BONDGENOOT NA EEN  
VERKEERSONGEVAL