

The background is a vibrant, abstract composition. It features several dark blue puzzle pieces scattered across the frame. Two hands are visible: one on the left holding a puzzle piece, and another on the right reaching towards one. The background is filled with various geometric shapes including circles, squares, and diamonds in shades of blue, red, and pink. There are also clusters of small red dots and curved lines, creating a dynamic and colorful environment.

PORTUGAL

MULTIDISCIPLINARY

COOPERATION

SYSTEM

This Multidisciplinary Cooperation System was developed by APAV and FENACERCI within the project "Linking Information for Adaptive and Accessible Child-Friendly Courts" co-funded by the European Union (LINK- 101097047-CERV-2022-DAPHNE) and the Foundation of Applied Disability Research (LINKS -Apa2024_058). The project aims to improve the accessibility of and integration of child protection systems in criminal proceedings for children with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities.¹

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Glossary

Augmentative and Alternative Communication – A set of communication methods used to supplement or replace speech or writing for individuals with impairments in spoken or written language. This includes gestures, sign language, picture boards, and electronic communication devices.

Case Management System – A digital system used to manage, store, and provide access to case-related data. In the context of Diana, it ensures the secure handling of case information for legal and administrative purposes.

Digital Information and Assistance Network Application – A platform designed to provide digital support, case management, and assistance to individuals, particularly those involved in legal or social service cases. It helps streamline communication and information sharing among relevant stakeholders.

EU Victims' Rights Directive – A European Union directive that establishes minimum rights and standards for victims of crime across EU member states. It ensures that victims receive appropriate support, protection, and access to justice.

General Data Protection Regulation – A comprehensive data protection law enacted by the European Union to regulate the collection, processing, and storage of personal data. It grants individuals greater control over their personal information and imposes strict compliance requirements on organisations handling such data.

Multidisciplinary Team – A collaborative team of professionals from different fields, such as legal, medical, psychological, and social services, who work together to address complex cases. MDTs are commonly used in cases involving vulnerable individuals, such as victims of crime or persons with disabilities.

Secure File Transfer Protocol – A secure method for transferring files over a network, using encryption to protect data during transmission. It is commonly used for safely exchanging sensitive documents, such as legal or case-related files.

Transition Plan (TP): Outlines post-case coordination by specifying how and when the victim will be informed of developments (e.g. sentencing, release), detailing safety measures, referrals to ongoing support services, and assigning clear responsibilities to each stakeholder to ensure continuous care and empowerment.

Procedural Accommodation Document (PAD): Records all identified accommodations, establishes a schedule for regular reassessments, and logs updates to the victim's vulnerabilities and support needs throughout the criminal proceedings, while defining roles, access controls, and a change log to guarantee accountability and confidentiality.

Definitions, Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACRONYMS / ABBREVIATIONS	DESCRIPTION
AT	Assessment Team
PAD	Procedural Accommodation Document
AAC	Augmentative and Alternative Communication
AIMA	Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum
APAV	Portuguese Association for Victim Support
APPACDM	Portuguese Association of Parents and Friends of Mentally Handicapped Citizens
CAB	Child Advisory Boards
CERCI	Co-operative for the Education and Rehabilitation of Disabled Children
CIG	Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality
CITE	Commission for Equality in Labor and Employment
CNPDPJ	National Commission for the Promotion of the Rights and Protection of Children and Young People
CPCJ	Child and Young People Protection Commissions
CPP	Code of Criminal Procedure
CPVC	Commission for the Protection of Victims of Crime
CRI	Inclusion Resource Centres
CRI	Resource Centres
DGRS	Directorate-General for Reintegration and Prison Services
ECMIJ	Entities with Competence in Matters of Childhood and Youth
EMAT	Multidisciplinary Technical Support Teams for Courts
FENACERCI	National Federation of Cooperatives for the Education and Rehabilitation of Disabled Citizens
GNR	National Republican Guard
HP	Public Hospitals
IGFEJ	Database of the Institute for Financial Management and Justice Equipment
IML	Legal Medical Institute

IP	Early Intervention Teams
LHC	Local Health Centres
MP	Public Prosecutor's Office
NP-SPWD	Nonprofit Organisations specialising in Supporting People with Disabilities
PA	Procedural Accommodations
PAD	A Distance Service Platform
PJ	Judicial Police
PSP	Public Security Police
RC	Rehabilitation Centres
SIMP	Public Prosecutor's Office Information System
SNS	National Health Service
SUS	National Health System
TP	Transition Plan
UNCRPD	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
VSE	Victim Support Associations

Introduction

Children with disabilities face significant and unique barriers when navigating the justice system in Portugal. Despite international commitments emphasising accessible legal processes for victims with disabilities, Portugal has yet to fully implement these principles, particularly concerning child victims with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities and users of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems. One of the most critical gaps is the accessibility of information, as many children with disabilities remain unaware of how to exercise their rights, such as filing a complaint or understanding judicial proceedings. This lack of accessible and comprehensible information exacerbates the underreporting of crimes and severely limits their ability to participate effectively in justice processes.

Furthermore, insufficient training for legal and justice professionals compounds these challenges. Many professionals lack specialised knowledge on how to communicate effectively with children with disabilities or adapt procedures to their specific needs. While some professionals take individual initiatives to foster more equitable conditions, the absence of structured, standardised guidance leaves much to personal discretion, resulting in inconsistent practices and outcomes. The complex legal language used in courts further creates a communication barrier, making it even more difficult for child victims with disabilities to fully understand and engage with the justice system.

In response to these pressing challenges, the Portuguese Association for Victim Support (APAV) and the National Federation of Cooperatives for the Education and Rehabilitation of Disabled Citizens (FENACERCI) organised and moderated a focus group on January 16, 2025. This roundtable brought together 25 professionals from key sectors involved in the justice system and child victim support (see Annex 6). These multidisciplinary exchanges allowed for an in-depth discussion of current gaps and opportunities for improvement, and were fundamental to adapting the proposed model to the Portuguese reality. Through these sessions, the model was conceptually and legally aligned with national frameworks, drawing on the diverse expertise of legal professionals, child protection officers, disability advocates, and victim support practitioners.

In parallel, eight CAB (Children Advisory Board) meetings were held with young people with disabilities. These sessions were invaluable for capturing their lived experiences and understanding their perspectives on access to justice. Their feedback on proposed tools and procedures played a critical role in shaping the model, ensuring it reflects not only institutional and legal considerations, but also the real needs and expectations of children who navigate the system (see Annex 7).

To explore the Diana model in greater depth, a second roundtable was held on February 25, with the Vice President of the Child Protection Commission, a Public Prosecutor's Office lawyer, and a legal expert from an organisation supporting people with disabilities. This dialogue further highlighted the urgent need for a more interconnected and adaptive system—one that places accessibility, inclusivity, and effective communication at its core. It also served to validate key elements of the model from a legal and operational standpoint, reinforcing its potential for national implementation.

As part of the adaptation process, several changes were made to ensure the model could be effectively integrated into the national context. These included adjustments at the legislative level, ensuring compatibility with national legal provisions concerning the rights of children and persons with disabilities. Technological adaptations were also necessary, considering that many participating organisations already operate specific case management systems. Therefore, tools and procedures were revised to ensure interoperability or ease of integration. Additionally, materials and instruments were tailored to reflect commonly used terminology, formats, and workflows in Portugal, increasing their practical relevance.

Moving forward, the successful implementation of this model depends not only on technical adaptations, but also on broader systemic changes. It is essential that inclusive practices do not remain dependent on individual efforts or good intentions, but become part of institutional routines. For this to happen, the establishment of national protocols and guidelines is crucial—offering structured, standardised procedures that promote accessibility and accommodate the specific needs of child victims with disabilities. Furthermore, the co-creation of accessible, child-friendly informational materials is recommended, ensuring children understand their rights and the steps involved in legal processes. Continuous training for justice professionals, covering inclusive communication, trauma-informed practices, and disability-sensitive approaches, should also be institutionalised. Lastly, monitoring mechanisms must be developed to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of these inclusive practices, promoting accountability and ongoing improvement.

This document thus presents a cooperative model designed to strengthen collaboration between stakeholders and ensure that the legal rights of disabled child victims are upheld through systematic accommodations and tailored practices. Developed from the insights of experienced professionals and the voices of children themselves, and aligned with Portugal's legal and institutional frameworks, this model offers practical, actionable recommendations to make the justice system more inclusive, accessible, and fair for all children.

01

**PART 1
INDIVIDUAL NEEDS
ASSESSMENT AND
PROCEDURAL
ACCOMMODATIONS FOR
CHILD VICTIMS WITH
INTELLECTUAL AND
PSYCHOSOCIAL DISABILITIES
IN Portugal**

1.1 Individual assessment

The methods and practices employed by professionals in criminal justice and child protection institutions reflect a multidisciplinary approach to assessing child victims' needs and barriers, particularly through the use of psychological tools and collaboration with relevant stakeholders. However, these assessments lack specific procedures designed to address the unique needs of children with disabilities. Instead, general procedures are often adapted on a case-by-case basis rather than implemented within a structured framework.

During the roundtable discussions, participants emphasised the need for a standardised approach to individual assessment that systematically integrates procedural accommodations. While they acknowledged the importance of such a framework in promoting equitable and appropriate support for children with disabilities, participants also stressed that its development and implementation cannot rely solely on individual or ad hoc initiatives. Instead, they highlighted that this effort must be driven and institutionalised by competent national authorities—namely through the guidance of professional orders, directives from oversight bodies, and, crucially, through legislative measures that explicitly prioritise accessibility and inclusion in justice and child protection systems. Establishing such standards would significantly enhance interinstitutional cooperation and ensure consistent, rights-based practices across the country.

While the structured and collaborative efforts of criminal justice and child protection professionals help facilitate the adoption of protective and procedural accommodations, a significant gap remains in the design and implementation of dedicated assessment processes for children with disabilities. During the round tables we understood that there are no predefined methodologies, which means that the professionals are often forced to rely on on-the-spot adaptations, which may compromise consistency, effectiveness, and the overall adequacy of support for child victims. These procedural accommodations begin at the very first point of contact a child has with the justice system—whether through law enforcement or victim support organisations. Ensuring that appropriate measures are in place from this initial interaction is crucial to providing consistent, effective, and inclusive support throughout the entire process.

1.1.1 Initial Information Gathering

In the Portuguese justice system, several entities play crucial roles in protecting and supporting victims, particularly vulnerable individuals such as children or people with disabilities. Below are the various organisations that participated in the roundtable discussion and could be involved in the journey of a child entering the justice system.

The Public Prosecutor first responsibility is to receive the reports and complaints about crimes and initiate criminal proceedings. When a crime is reported to or a complaint filed with the police, the police must receive it and then send it to the Public Prosecution Service so that a case may be opened.

The Public Prosecutor then takes over responsibility for the investigation. Police officers gather the evidence but the Public Prosecutor has the power to manage the case and may therefore guide the police as to the measures to be taken. In some complex cases, the Public Prosecutor takes an active part in gathering evidence by questioning witnesses and expert witnesses and visiting the crime scene, for example.

The **Judicial Police** (PJ) is the law enforcement agency with reserved competence to conduct the criminal investigation of crimes against children. PJ becomes involved early in the process, as soon as a crime is reported, regardless of who reports it. After completing the initial evidence gathering and preservation, PJ passes to the Public Prosecutor's Office, which oversees the investigation and ensures the law is followed. The Public Prosecutor evaluates whether there is sufficient evidence to charge the accused and initiate legal proceedings. **Victim support associations** provide emotional, legal, and social support to victims throughout the justice process. These organisations are typically contacted by the police, the Public Prosecutor, or social workers when the victim needs specialised assistance. However, they may not be involved if none of the parties involved in the case requests their help. **Social workers** are called upon when there is concern for the victim's welfare, such as in cases of neglect or abuse. They assess the victim's living conditions and ensure access to essential services like housing, medical care, and rehabilitation. Social workers can be contacted by the police, the Public Prosecutor, or victim support associations.

Lastly, **organisations supporting people with disabilities** are involved when they are called upon by any of the previously mentioned entities. These organisations can help work with the child due to their specialised knowledge or, in extreme cases, may be responsible for institutionalising the child if necessary.

PART 1

INDIVIDUAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND PROCEDURAL ACCOMMODATIONS FOR CHILD VICTIMS WITH INTELLECTUAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL DISABILITIES IN PORTUGAL

Communication and collaboration between these organisations typically occur at key stages in the process. Early identification of a child victim, whether through a referral from a school, healthcare provider, or through law enforcement, triggers the involvement of various professionals. Each organisation, depending on its role, joins the system to offer specialised support, but it is essential that this collaboration is well-coordinated. For example, the social worker is typically involved early on to assess the child's needs and provide ongoing support, while CERIC professionals may join the process to offer specific support regarding the child's disability and assist with navigating the court system. APAV becomes involved when judicial proceedings begin, ensuring that the child's rights are respected throughout the process. However, there is often a lack of clear procedural guidelines or standardised communication between these stakeholders.

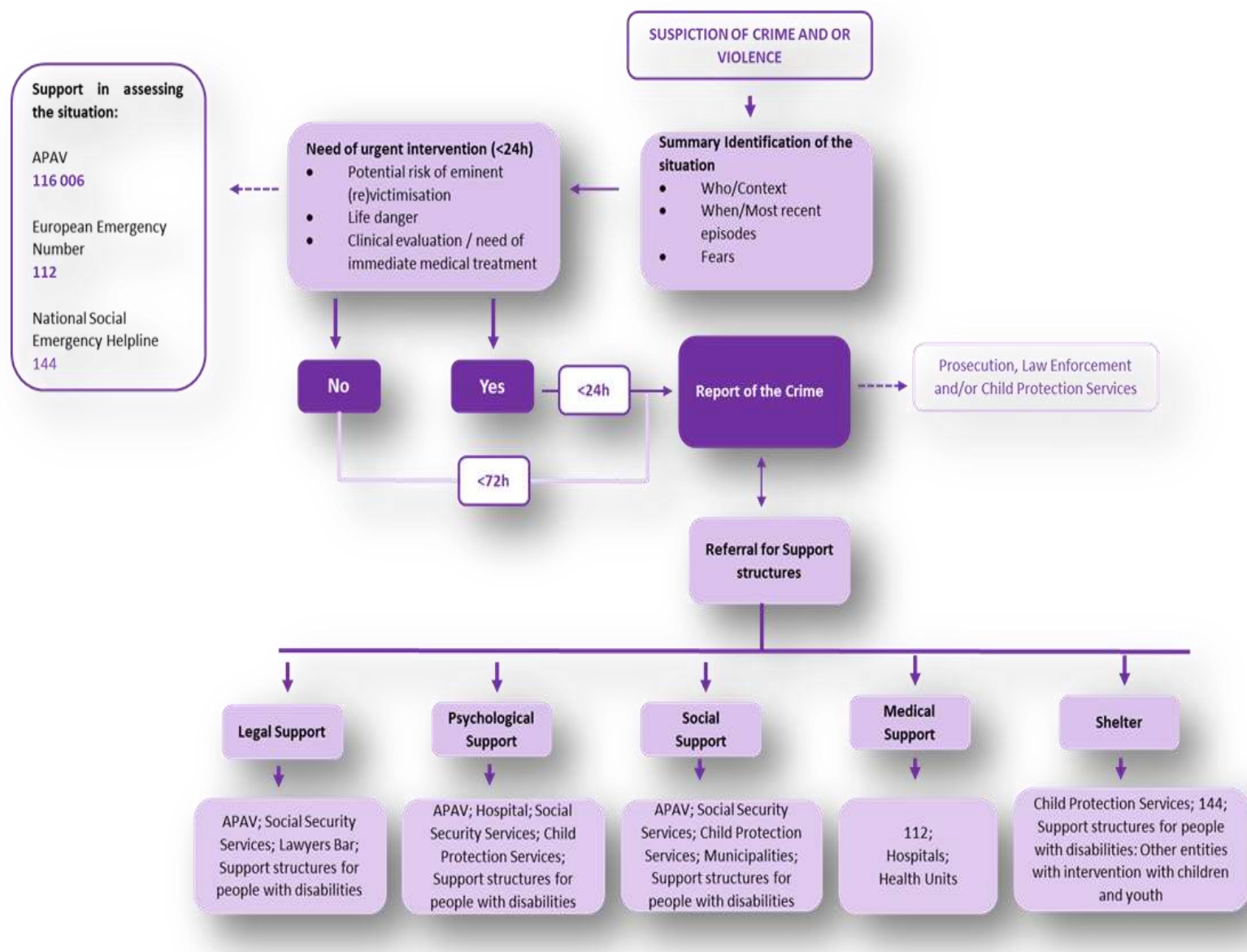


Figure 3 - Portuguese System

1.1.2. Judicial Police

The Judicial Police (Polícia Judiciária) employs the cognitive interview as a psychological tool designed to gather critical information during the preliminary phase of an investigation. This method is adaptable to any victim and is particularly relevant in cases involving children, including children with disabilities. The cognitive interview aims to stimulate free recall and encourage detailed and open-ended responses, while being tailored to the needs and capacities of each child. The assessment process begins with the collection of preliminary information, which constitutes the first step of the cognitive interview procedure. This includes gathering initial information from institutions familiar with the child, such as educational and support organisations. Informal information collection is also carried out through family members and professionals who interact with the child daily. Additionally, relevant records and documents are compiled to serve as evidential support for preparing the case file and the interview process.

At this stage, there are no predefined adaptations specifically linked to the child's type of support needs. The process of adaptation depends largely on the inspector's judgment, professional experience, and training. While the cognitive interview is highly flexible, the absence of a formalised decision-making system can hinder consistency and effectiveness in accommodating individual needs. A structured protocol or assessment tool could help inspectors identify needs and apply appropriate adjustments. This system could include checklists for identifying signs of vulnerability, communication guidance, and recommended environmental or procedural accommodations. The cognitive interview conducted by the Judicial Police is guided by several key elements. The inspectors assess the child's abilities and needs upon arrival, taking into account the child's characteristics, demeanour, and interaction with accompanying adults. Conversations often begin with neutral topics to help assess the child's ability to distinguish truth from falsehood, which provides insight into cognitive development. Open-ended questions are prioritised to encourage narrative recall, and when needed, closed-ended questions are used for clarification. Summarising techniques are also employed to support the child in providing additional details. All information gathered is thoroughly documented as part of the case file.

Currently, there is no standardised nationwide set of questions guiding these interviews. The flexibility of the method allows for individual adaptation but may also lead to variability in interview quality, depending on the professional's competencies. The development of a baseline interview guide—flexible yet rooted in best practices—could help ensure consistency while respecting each child's individuality. During expert roundtable

discussions, the cognitive interview method was positively referenced, suggesting its usefulness and supporting its formal integration into a broader standardised response system. Inspectors receive training in victim interviewing techniques, yet specific training for working with children with disabilities is currently limited. This presents a critical gap in ensuring effective and non-revictimising interactions. Professional responsibilities include assessing the child's behaviour and cognitive-linguistic capacity, applying interview strategies adapted to children, and coordinating with multidisciplinary professionals, including psychologists, social workers, and medical staff. It is essential to strengthen mandatory and ongoing training programs on child development and psychopathology, alternative and augmentative communication (AAC), and child-centred approaches for children with disabilities. Additionally, clarifying the inspector's role within the multidisciplinary cooperation system—particularly when and how to involve specialised professionals—can enhance the quality and consistency of the response.

1.1.3 Organisations supporting people with disabilities

In organisations such as CERCI, information is often obtained through observation or contacts with professionals. These insights may emerge informally through consultations and service interactions.

- **Court Accompaniment:** CERCI professionals may accompany children to court, serving as a reference figure to provide a sense of security without interfering with testimony or communication.

Children and their families typically become involved with these organisations through referrals from various sources, including educational institutions, social services, healthcare providers, or even directly from family members who seek support for the child's specific needs. In some cases, children may already be receiving services from the organisation before any criminal case arises, while in other situations, they may be referred following a report of victimisation or involvement in an investigation.

1.1.4. Social Worker Order²

Representatives of the Social Worker Order highlighted their interventions across all age groups, including children.

- **Multidisciplinary Teams:** These teams include a range of professionals such as medical practitioners, therapists, psychologists, and social workers. They work together to address the needs of child victims of crime, ensuring that their interventions are holistic and cover the medical, psychological, and social aspects of support.
- **Preventive Programs:** Written programs with guidelines for preventing and addressing abuse and discrimination. These programs stipulate specific procedures for cases involving children with disabilities, providing guidance for professionals on how to proceed.

1.1.5. Victim Support Services

The Portuguese Association for Victim Support (APAV) follows structured procedures to provide effective support to all victims of violence.

- **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Minimal intervention is prioritised during interviews with child victims to preserve their testimony for judicial proceedings.
- **Court Accompaniment:** When necessary, APAV provides emotional security during judicial proceedings without delving into the details of victimisation. This approach ensures that information gathered by other institutions remains uncontaminated and valid for judicial use.
- **Judicial Collaboration:** APAV's role is crucial in supporting the justice system to prevent the loss of evidence throughout the judicial process. APAV professionals collaborate with law enforcement and judicial bodies to ensure that children are not re-traumatised during their participation in the justice system, and that all necessary accommodations are made to facilitate their understanding and engagement in the process.

² Refer to « [Ordem dos Assistentes Sociais](#) », Professional Body for Social Workers (public association).

1.2 Timing of individual assessments and the notion of criminal proceedings

1.2.1 Identifying risks, vulnerabilities and barriers

Child and Young People Protection Commissions (CPCJ), established under Portugal's Law on the Protection of Children and Young People at Risk (Law No. 147/99, of 1 September), play a crucial role in safeguarding children and young people (ages 0-18). Operating in every region, the CPCJ is responsible for diagnosing and identifying situations of risk – those that compromise a child's safety, health, education, or development – and for addressing the identified vulnerabilities. To ensure thorough evaluations, the CPCJ is advised to work with specialised social professionals and, where appropriate, security forces. This collaboration is not mandatory. There is no assessment protocol to identify children's individualised vulnerabilities, understand their needs, and respond to them appropriately. making sure that the needs of children with disabilities are identified, recorded, and responded to.

1.2.1.1 Areas of potential vulnerabilities

There is a clear need for a standardised protocol to identify risks, vulnerabilities, and barriers, establish a coordinating assessment team, and determine the necessary procedural accommodations for children with disabilities. In this regard, the roundtables emphasised the importance of a child-centred approach, considering the following factors:

Individual Factors

- **Age:** Younger children are more vulnerable, as they face greater challenges in verbalising situations of violence and understanding legal procedures. Prioritising younger children is essential, given their increased difficulty in expressing experiences of abuse.
- **Disability:** Children with severe disabilities, particularly those with communication impairments, encounter additional barriers in reporting abuse and participating effectively in judicial processes.
- **Gender:** Although not identified as a primary vulnerability factor, it was noted that male victims are often underdiagnosed due to stereotypes associated with masculinity.

Beyond individual vulnerabilities, the roundtables also highlighted two major sets of obstacles that affect access to justice for children with disabilities: social barriers and systemic barriers.

Social and Cultural Barriers:

Access to and participation in the justice system by children with disabilities are often hindered by:

- **Cultural Norms:** In some communities, practices such as early marriage with family consent make it harder to recognise and report abuse.
- **Social and Family Dynamics:** In rural areas or low-density populations, families may conceal cases of violence or abuse due to shame, stigma, or mistrust of the justice system.
- **Risk of Re-victimisation:** The justice system often requires children to retell their experiences multiple times, increasing their emotional vulnerability.

Systemic Barriers:

Structural challenges within the justice system also limit child participation:

- **Rigidity of Procedures:** A lack of flexibility in judicial processes can hinder children's ability to engage fully. For example, if a child feels more comfortable sitting on the floor, professionals should adapt accordingly to facilitate a more supportive environment.
- **Communication Barriers:** The absence of accessible materials—such as simplified language resources, augmentative communication tools, assistive technologies, and qualified sign language interpreters—poses significant obstacles to effective participation for children with sensory and communication disabilities.

1.2.1.2 Strategies to involve other stakeholders to identify and mitigate barriers

Enhancing collaboration, leveraging specialised expertise, and strengthening systemic support are key to ensuring effective protection and inclusion of children with disabilities within the justice system.

- **Involvement of specialised professionals:** Psychologists, speech or occupational therapists, social workers and others should be engaged in child assessments. The Diana System in Part II aims to address this need through the identification of support professional (see Part II 2.1.3 - Step 2 | Identifying Support Professionals).
- **Training legal professionals** (judges, lawyers, prosecutors, police officers) is crucial to better handle cases involving children with disabilities.

- **Adequate time and preparation:** The justice system must allow sufficient time for preparing cases involving children with severe disabilities. The Diana Information's System address this need of time to determine specific protection needs and to determine whether and to what extent they would benefit from special measures in the course of criminal proceedings (see Part II 2.1.3 - Step 3 – In-depth Needs Assessment and Procedural Accommodations).
- **Strengthening support networks:** Creating inter-institutional networks to facilitate communication between government and non-governmental organisations. The Diana Information's System, through the identification of legal representation and the formation of the assessment coordination team naturally promotes this collaboration (see Part II 2.1.3 - Step 2 | Identifying Support Professionals). Also, the Resource Page will map available services using geolocation features and will integrate all relevant information provided by the ChatBot.
- **Continuous training:** Raising awareness and training justice system professionals to improve accessibility and inclusion.

1.2.2 Workflow for assessing and addressing needs and barriers

When a child victim comes to the police to report a crime, it is imperative to have a structured and sensitive approach to ensure their needs are met comprehensively. This process involves multiple steps to identify and address any risks, vulnerabilities, and barriers the child might face.

Step 1 of the Diana System focuses on identifying risks, vulnerabilities, and barriers at the moment a complaint is made, setting the foundation for appropriate intervention. This includes gathering information on the child's disability, psychosocial context, and specific needs. It is essential that the justice system ensure the involvement of specialised professionals (psychologists, speech or occupational therapists, and social workers) in child assessments (supported by the Diana System's Step 2 identification of support professionals). A need addressed by the Diana Information System's is a structured in-depth Step 3 assessment - strengthen coordination by an Assessment Team (AT) between governmental and non-governmental support networks (facilitated by the Diana System's coordination of professionals and mapping of services on its Resource Page and Chatbot).

The following workflow outlines these essential steps for assessing and addressing the needs of a child victim, ensuring their well-being and effective participation throughout the proceedings.

1.2.2.1 Step 1 Identifying risks, vulnerabilities and barriers

When fill a complain, Diana Information System will have instruments to identify risks, vulnerabilities and barriers (see example in Annex 2 and 3) accessing:

- **Basic Information Collection** about the child, such as age, family background, and case circumstances.
- **Identification of vulnerabilities**, including disability and/or psychosocial conditions.
- **Identification of immediate communication support needs** (e.g. AAC, language simplification, support person, environmental accommodation) or accessibility needs (e.g. uses wheelchair).
- **Identification of the primary support person**, if possible, one expert that are known to the child and who might facilitate the assessment process (e.g. psychologists, teachers, speech therapists and others whose opinion might be relevant for the process). Local disability organisations (e.g., Cerebral Palsy Associations or CERCI) will be contacted if necessary. If the victim is already supported by an organisation, that entity will designate a support person and coordinate accommodations.
- **Complain Information**, i.e. essential case details relevant to the complaint.
- **Identified vulnerabilities**, including gender-based discrimination, systemic social and cultural barriers.
- **Case Officer (CO) Identification** - The Public Prosecutor's Office and/or the Court decide which institution, organisation, or service should appoint a Case Officer. This may be an organisation working in the field of disability, a member of the Child Protection Commission, or a victim support association (see Step 2 | Identifying Support Professionals – 2. Connection to security forces and the judicial system and definition of the Case Officer).

1.2.2.2- Step 2 | In-depth assessment of the child

The crime is assessed as per legal requirements. However, the Diana Information System will ensure this process is adapted to the victim's needs through comprehensive vulnerability and accommodation assessments. This means that while this assessment may be carried out by police authorities responsible for specific aspects of the criminal investigation (such as the Judicial Police and the National Institute of Forensic Medicine), the *Diana Information System* plays a crucial role in identifying vulnerabilities and ensuring this process is adapted to the victim's needs.

- **Assessment Team (AT)** – The Diana Information System provides tools for identifying vulnerabilities (Annex 3) and procedural accommodations (Annex 4). The assessment should involve a multidisciplinary team – Assessment Team (AT) - composed of psychologists, social workers, educators, and, when necessary, specialised therapists or doctors.
- **Procedural Accommodation Document (PAD)** - Diana Information System plays a crucial role in identifying vulnerabilities and ensuring that appropriate accommodations are in place (See Part II | Step 3 – In-depth Needs Assessment and Procedural Accommodations). The information obtained from the assessment will support *Procedural Accommodation Document* (PAD) that should be updated as needed.

1.2.2.3- Step 3 | Ensuring continued updates to the individual assessment throughout the criminal proceedings

The Diana System ensures that children with disabilities receive timely and appropriate support throughout criminal proceedings. Following the initial report, the Assessment Team (AT) identifies necessary procedural accommodations, which are incorporated into a secure victim file - *Procedural Accommodation Document* (PAD). This document should be kept separate from the main criminal file and accessed only when strictly necessary, ensuring privacy and the child's best interests (Case Officer, Victim Lawyer, Judge) (see Table 1 | Part II). The AT recommends accommodations, defines a communication protocol, and ensures measures remain updated.

The case officer maintains responsibility across all stages, coordinating with prosecutors or judges as needed. Upon conclusion of the case, a Transition Plan (TP) is created, especially important if the offender is sentenced and future updates to the victim are required. A form should be created for both PAD and TP.

The Transition Plan (TP) outlines post-case coordination by specifying how and when the victim will be informed of developments (e.g. sentencing, release), detailing safety measures, referrals to ongoing support services, and assigning clear responsibilities to each stakeholder to ensure continuous care and empowerment. An example *Transition Plan* (TP) might include the following elements:

- Information-Sharing Protocol (What type of information the victim should receive and responsible parties for providing updates (e.g., prosecution office, victim support organisation);
- Risk Reassessment and Protection Measures (evaluation of potential future risks, update or continuation of protective measures, coordination with police, child protection agencies, or disability organisations);
- Record of Relevant Stakeholders (updated list of all professionals and institutions involved, indication of roles and responsibilities during the post-sentencing phase;
- Consent and Victim Participation (record of victim's consent for receiving updates; opportunities for the victim to express preferences or request changes to the plan);
- Victim's Contact Preferences and Safety Considerations (preferred communication methods, safety protocols for re-contacting the victim (especially in sensitive or high-risk cases, updated contact information of legal representative or support person);
- Information-Sharing Protocol (what type of information the victim should receive - e.g., offender release, parole decisions - when and how this information will be communicated, responsible parties for providing updates (e.g., prosecution office, victim support organisation).

The **Procedural Accommodation Document (PAD)** records all identified accommodations, establishes a schedule for regular reassessments, and logs updates to the victim's vulnerabilities and support needs throughout the criminal proceedings, while defining roles, access controls, and a change log to guarantee accountability and confidentiality. A **Procedural Accommodation Document (PAD)** should include the following sections to ensure ongoing updates to the individual assessment throughout criminal proceedings:

- Case & Victim Identification (case number, victim name/ID, date of birth, and disability type);
- Initial Assessment Summary (date of first assessment, key vulnerabilities identified, and baseline accommodations put in place);

- Accommodation & Support Plan (detailed list of procedural accommodations - e.g., simplified language, AAC, extended time, private hearing space);
- Review Schedule & Triggers (predetermined review dates - e.g., before each hearing - and event-triggered reviews - e.g., new evidence, case transfer);
- Updated Needs & Adjustments (section to capture any changes in vulnerabilities or new accommodation requirements as the case evolves);
- Roles & Responsibilities (names/roles of professionals responsible for conducting reassessments, implementing changes, and notifying stakeholders);
- Communication Protocol (how and when updates are communicated to the victim, legal representatives, and relevant authorities, respecting confidentiality);
- Confidentiality & Access Controls (guidelines on who may view or edit the PAD and under what conditions, consistent with data-protection rules);
- Resource & Referral Links (direct links or references to the Diana Resource Page, support services, and any external expert consultations);
- Sign-off & Approval (signatures or digital equivalents from the case officer and key team members to validate each review cycle).

1.2.3 Collaboration paths in a multi-stakeholder system

Legislative improvements, formal training, and the expansion of specialised multidisciplinary teams are essential to overcoming current barriers and ensuring that child victims with disabilities have full access to justice. The implementation of these measures will enhance intersectoral collaboration and promote a more inclusive justice system for all children. The following sections detail specific recommendations regarding stakeholder mapping, addressing identified gaps and barriers, stakeholder categorisation, and building sustainable communication and referral systems.

1.2.3.1 Mapping stakeholders

The first step in establishing a collaboration path is to identify all relevant stakeholders who can contribute to supporting children with disabilities in the justice system. In the Portuguese context, the following actors are critical:

- Actors in Justice, Education, and Health Sectors
 - Justice Sector:
Professionals within the justice system—including public prosecutors, lawyers, judges, police officers—operate through the following structures:
 - Education Sector:
Professionals within the education system—including psychologists, and therapists (e.g., occupational, speech or psychomotor therapists)—operate through the following structures:
 - Schools – Private and public schools that naturally accommodate students with disabilities. In Portugal, inclusive education is mandatory.
 - Early Intervention Teams (IP) – Multidisciplinary teams formed through a protocol between the ministries - health, social security, and education - aimed to support children with disabilities aged from 0 to 6 years old. These teams are housed in specialised disability institutions.
 - Inclusion Resource Centres (CRI) - Multidisciplinary teams housed in specialised disability institutions, funded by the Ministry of Education to support students with disabilities from age 6 in school settings.
 - Health Sector: Professionals within the health system - including pediatricians, psychologists, psychiatrists, therapists (e.g., occupational or speech therapists) - operate through the following structures:
 - Rehabilitation Centres (RC) - Physical and Functional Rehabilitation focuses on restoring motor and functional abilities, particularly in patients who have experienced strokes or other neurological conditions.
 - Public Hospitals (HP)- Public hospitals in Portugal are integral components of the National Health Service (SNS) and are primarily responsible for providing specialised healthcare services within this system.
 - Local Health Centres (LHC) - Basic unit of the National Health System (SUS) for providing care and healthcare to the population. The Health Centre is the first door you should knock on if you need medical care.

- Social Services: Professionals within the social system—including social workers, psychologists, and therapists (e.g., occupational, speech or psychomotor therapists)—operate through the following structures:
 - Child and Young People Protection Commissions (CPCJs) - These commissions operate nationwide, addressing cases of children and youth (ages 0 to 18) in dangerous situations.
 - Nonprofit Organisations specialising in Supporting People with Disabilities (NP-SPWD), including those focused on intellectual (e.g., CERCIS or APPACDM) or physical (e.g., Cerebral Palsy Associations) challenges.
 - Victims Support Entities (VSE) - Portuguese Association for Victim Support follows structured procedures to provide effective support to all victims of violence (e.g. APAV or CPVC)
 - Multidisciplinary Court Advisory Teams (EMAT) - Supervised by Social Security, these teams provide technical advice to courts in cases involving minors. They consist of professionals from various fields who monitor and evaluate cases, inform judges of case developments, prepare social reports during investigations, and review measures during implementation—all in accordance with the law.
- Children with Disabilities and their Families: Representatives of children with disabilities and their families are crucial for providing valuable perspectives and ensuring their voices are heard. They play a central role in ensuring that support and advocacy reflect lived experience. Key actors include:
 - The Child with Disability - As the primary stakeholder and rights-holder, the child's views, preferences, and consent (as appropriate to age and capacity) must be actively solicited and respected throughout all processes.
 - Parents or Legal Guardians - Responsible for decision-making and care, they act as advocates, provide essential background information, and help navigate justice, education, health, and social services.
 - Siblings and Extended Family - Often involved in daily support and emotional care, they contribute important insights into the child's communication needs, routines, and well-being.
 - Family Advocacy Organisations - Groups such as national and regional parent associations (e.g., FENACERCI member bodies) offer peer support, information, and legal guidance for families of children with disabilities.

- Self-Advocacy and Peer Support Groups - Led by individuals with disabilities, these networks empower children and young people to express their needs, build confidence, and participate in decision-making.
- Informal Caregivers - Neighbours, extended relatives, or volunteers who regularly assist the family and may serve as additional reporters or support persons in justice and service contexts.
- Cultural and Community Mediators - Trusted community figures or interpreters who facilitate communication between families and professionals, ensuring that cultural or language barriers do not impede access to services.

1.2.3.2- Identifying Gaps and Solutions

A significant barrier is the rigidity of the justice system and its lack of adaptation to the needs of children with disabilities.

- Lack of magistrates and specialised professionals in the judicial system.
- Technicians who know the child well are not always called to assess cases involving disabilities or communication difficulties.
- First-line technicians, such as the Multidisciplinary Technical Support Teams for Courts (EMAT), were highlighted as fundamental, but often do not receive due recognition. EMAT teams do not exist throughout the country. Some regions of the country lack access to social and judicial support.
- Difficulties in obtaining necessary documentation and assessments: Delays in obtaining crucial documents like medical reports and psychological evaluations can significantly impact the judicial process.
- Lack of awareness and training among justice professionals: Many justice professionals lack adequate training on the specific needs and vulnerabilities of children with disabilities.
- The justice system in Portugal has been described as overly bureaucratic and rigid, with little adaptation to the needs of victims with disabilities.
- Examples include technical language that is incomprehensible to victims and the limitation of the intervention of monitoring technicians in hearings, since, with rare exceptions, they can only communicate directly with the judge.
- Attitudinal and cultural barriers were highlighted in the justice system, which often devalue the contribution of front-line technicians.

1.2.3.3 Overcoming barriers

To ensure the effective implementation of collaboration paths, several barriers need to be addressed:

- Coordinated work between systems
 - Collaboration between the judicial, social, health and education systems must be bidirectional, promoting greater literacy about the needs of each sector and adjusting language and practices for more effective and inclusive action.
 - The judicial system should collaborate with those who understand the functionality of the child victim, such as therapists or specialised technicians, who can help with communication and create more child-friendly environments.
 - Lawyers often take on the role of intermediaries between technicians and the Judicial. Better coordination between the social and judicial sectors, with advance preparation for hearings, is essential to ensure children's right to participation and understanding.
- Valuing First-Line Technicians
 - The Multidisciplinary Technical Support Teams for the Courts (EMAT) were recognised as essential in supplying courts with critical information, particularly on topics such as Inclusive Education and national and international guidelines concerning children and young people with disabilities.
 - To ensure comprehensive support across the country, it was suggested that these teams be expanded to provide nationwide coverage, potentially through the implementation of mobile units.
- Focus on Individualised Accommodations:
 - The importance of ensuring children's active participation in the judicial process was emphasised, guaranteeing that they fully understand what has happened, what is happening, and what will happen. This understanding allows children to take ownership of the process and feel that their voice is valued.
 - Specialised professionals play a crucial role in identifying the individual needs of each child and implementing appropriate accommodations. These may include simplifying the language used during the process or utilising augmentative communication systems. Such measures are essential to promote effective, respectful communication that is tailored to the characteristics and abilities of each child.

- Flexible and Accessible Judicial Processes: Mandate Support Professional Mediation

- Simplifying bureaucratic procedures and introducing greater flexibility to address individual needs is essential. For example, the support person professional must be able to intervene in court proceedings, both before and during the hearing, to ensure that the victim conveys all intended information.

"The role of the accompanying technician should be fundamental, but most of the time they cannot intervene in courtrooms." (Victim Support Service Professional-Roundtable Participant)

- The law should explicitly mandate the presence of specialised professionals, such as psychologists, especially in official records intended for future reference.

"The law must guarantee that technicians can intervene directly in hearings, without depending solely on the judge's sensitivity."
(Victim Support Entity -Roundtable Participant)

- Transpose international guidelines into Portuguese legislation :To address existing legislative gaps, the adoption of clear legal frameworks for procedural accommodation is crucial. Implementing models like Barnahus or mandating the use of simplified language would promote consistency and better serve child victims.

"We need to transpose international guidelines into Portuguese legislation"
(Victim Support Service Professional Roundtable Participant)

- Guaranteeing Children's Rights: Every child should have access to legal representation and clear information about their rights. Additionally, ensuring mandatory legal representation for child victims is vital. During the roundtables, participants emphasised the critical role of lawyers in providing direct and timely support to victims, particularly given the shortage of staff in the Public Prosecutor's Office. Lawyers can establish strong, immediate connections with child victims and collaborate effectively with other professionals, such as psychologists, medical experts, and victim support technicians, to ensure comprehensive care and protection.

"A child can go through the entire judicial process without being accompanied by a lawyer, which compromises their rights." (Lawyer-Roundtable Participant)

1.2.3.4. Categorising and cataloguing stakeholders

Understanding the roles of stakeholders and building a comprehensive catalogue of contact is critical for creating a robust multi-stakeholder database. In Portugal:

- Categorisation of Roles
 - Schools, early intervention teams (IP) and other education stakeholders focus on identifying and supporting children's needs in their developmental and educational contexts.
 - Child and Young People Protection Commissions^[1] (CPCJ) and social workers address immediate risks and facilitate referrals for legal and psychological support.
 - Lawyers and victims support professionals act as intermediaries between the justice system and the child, ensuring the child's voice is heard.
 - Public Prosecutors, Judges, Courts ensure criminal proceedings and have the power to make certain accommodation mandatory.
 - Police Officers are first-line entities for receiving crime complaints.
 - Entities with Competence in Matters of Childhood and Youth can identify situations of danger, whether they involve suspected abuse or other risk situations.
 - Health Services, Victim Support Associations, Non-Governmental Organisations, and Community/General Public, all can identify and report risk situations.

- Building a Contact Network
 - o A centralised directory of stakeholders, maintained by a coordinating entity, should be developed to streamline communication and referrals.
 - o This database should include each entity's responsibilities, ensuring clear pathways for cooperation and accountability.

"When there is alignment between entities, the results are always much better." (Victim Support Service Professional Roundtable Participant)

1.2.3.5. Building and maintaining communication and referral pathways

Effective support for child victims with disabilities necessitates robust intersectoral collaboration among justice, education, health, and social services. Establishing and maintaining clear communication and referral pathways is essential to ensure these children receive comprehensive and coordinated care. The following key strategies proposed have been identified by the roundtables to enhance such collaboration. Participants emphasised the importance of formalising relationships between stakeholders to ensure consistent communication and collaboration.

Memoranda of Understanding and Protocols

- Establishing formal agreements between justice, education, health, and social services to ensure ongoing collaboration beyond individual cases.
- Implementing a standardised referral system to streamline intersectoral communication. Once a child or young person is identified as a vulnerable victim, a support professional—such as a psychologist or social worker—is contacted. If the victim has specific support needs due to a disability or psychosocial disorder, specialised institutions should be engaged, and a professional with expertise in the predominant area of need should be assigned. This more restricted team, formed immediately after the report is made, determines the coordinating entity of the case and the case manager.

"When there is alignment between entities, the results are always much better."
(Victim Support Service Professional-Roundtable Participant)

PART 1

INDIVIDUAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND PROCEDURAL ACCOMMODATIONS FOR CHILD VICTIMS WITH INTELLECTUAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL DISABILITIES IN PORTUGAL

Regular Intersectoral Meetings

- Periodic meetings between justice, health, education, and social support sectors would strengthen relationships and ensure a shared understanding of procedures.
- Encouraging case-specific coordination while maintaining a broader systemic approach, ensuring that interventions are tailored to each case's unique needs, while remaining consistent with established protocols and supported by a comprehensive network of resources.

"It's the technicians who know the children's characteristics best and can create the necessary welcoming environments." (Occupational Therapist from a Rehabilitation Centre Roundtable Participant)

Training and Capacity Building

- Specialised training programs for all professionals involved in supporting child victims with disabilities.
- Ensuring that legal professionals, social workers, and educators receive training on accessible communication, trauma-informed care, and disability rights.

"Training on adapted communication and awareness is essential to improve the judicial process." (Professional from an entity specialising in disability Roundtable Participant)

Integration of Multidisciplinary Teams

- Establishing multidisciplinary teams, such as the EMAT (Multidisciplinary Technical Support Teams for Courts), in ensuring that courts receive technical expertise on disabilities and inclusion.
- Expanding EMAT teams nationwide, including mobile units for underserved regions.

"The EMAT are essential for providing courts with information, especially on inclusive education." (Professional from an entity specialising in disability)

1.3. Setting procedural accommodations to adjust proceedings to child victims

Procedural accommodations for child victims focus on fostering their meaningful participation while minimising trauma and the risk of secondary victimisation. These measures aim to uphold children's rights, account for their developmental stages, and address their specific needs. In the Portuguese Code of Criminal Procedure, victims are described as particularly vulnerable—a category that includes people with disabilities.

Portugal has transposed the Victims' Rights Directive into national legislation through Law No. 45/2023, known as the Victim Statute. Chapter IV of this law defines the framework for Particularly Vulnerable Victims and details their rights in several articles: Article 20 - Granting the status of particularly vulnerable victim; Article 21 - Rights of particularly vulnerable victims; Article 22 - Rights of child victims; Article 23 - Use of videoconference or teleconference; Article 24 - Statements for future reference.

The Vulnerable Victim Status recommends that an individual assessment be made of particularly vulnerable victims to determine whether they should benefit from special protection measures, i.e. (a) Statements are taken in an informal and private environment, with a view to ensuring the spontaneity and sincerity of responses. (b) When statements and declarations involve the presence of the accused, they are made via videoconference or teleconference, if this proves necessary to ensure that statements or testimony can be made without constraints. But there is no obligation! Furthermore, the status of especially vulnerable victims does not address the specific interview needs of children with disabilities and the accommodations that should be made for their benefit.

Through the roundtables, we realised that some hearings are conducted outside the court, in a setting that is securitising for the child. However, this procedure is not standard and depends on the sensitivity of the justice agent involved. At the CAB meeting we were able to see that hearings still normally take place without any adaptation and in the presence of the aggressor.

Law No. 147/99 states that the CPCJ or Judges may determine the intervention of professionals from various areas, or determine the use of technical means that they deem appropriate. However, it is a recommendation, not an established and mandatory procedure.

During the roundtable discussions, we presented professionals with a provision concerning the status of especially vulnerable victims, which stipulates that "The victim is accompanied, when making statements or giving testimony, by a technician specially qualified to accompany him/her, previously designated by the Public Prosecutor's Office or the court." However, they argued that this measure does not address the core issue, as in the courtroom, the accompanying technician has no role in the process. Additionally, there is no prior preparation to ensure the trial respects the child's right to participate fully, such as adapting the language used by the judge to be more accessible.

Regarding the right to a lawyer, although it is recommended by law, and a right of the child, it is not mandatory; a child or adolescent who goes directly to a complaint reporting point, if he or she does not expressly request it, will go through the entire process as a victim without a lawyer.

1.3.1 Accessibility and procedural accommodations

Portugal has made efforts to address procedural accommodations for children with disabilities in justice systems; however, there are areas where these accommodations need to be strengthened to ensure full accessibility and compliance with international standards, particularly the International Principles and Guidelines on Access to Justice (Principles 2 and 3). The following recommendations aim to adapt and strengthen procedural accommodations within the Portuguese justice system to better meet the needs of children, particularly those with disabilities. Drawing on national legislation, international standards, and direct input from children themselves, these proposals seek to ensure child-centred, accessible, and inclusive justice processes. They highlight concrete changes necessary to create safer, more supportive environments that uphold the rights and well-being of all child victims and witnesses, while also promoting professional practices that are sensitive to developmental and disability-related needs.

- Interviews in Accessible Premises: In Portugal, Law No. 45/2023 recognises the need for interviews with child victims to be conducted in private and informal settings. However, this is not mandatory and often depends on the discretion of justice agents. To align with the directive, interviews should be conducted in child-friendly and accessible environments, equipped with comfortable furniture, soft colours, and augmentative communication tools for children with disabilities. In exceptional cases, interviews could also take place in the child's home, provided it is deemed safe.

- Interviews Conducted by Trained Professionals: While Portuguese legislation recommends the presence of a qualified technician during interviews, there is no legal obligation for this to occur consistently. It is essential to mandate that all interviews are carried out by professionals trained in handling cases involving children, including those with disabilities or vulnerabilities. Depending on the child's major vulnerability, they could be psychologists or therapists - speech occupational. For example, for a child or youth with psychosocial problems could be more appropriate a clinical psychologist. This ensures sensitivity and competence in addressing their specific needs and adapting the interviewing process (e.g., finding alternatives to complex hypothetical questions, providing extra time to answer, permitting breaks as needed and using plain language; using visual aids or storyboards to help children with communication difficulties understand and answer questions).
- Consistency in Interviewers: Repeated questioning can cause re-victimisation. To prevent this, the same professionals should conduct all interviews with the child. This principle is partially implemented in Portugal but needs formalisation to ensure its application across all cases.
- Gender Preference in Interviews: Portuguese law does not explicitly provide for victims of sexual violence, gender-based violence, or violence in close relationships to choose the gender of their interviewer. This accommodation should be incorporated to respect the victim's preferences, ensuring comfort and trust during the process.
- Hearing Victims Without Courtroom Presence: Although videoconferencing is permitted by law (Article 23), it is not consistently applied. Legislation should require the use of communication technology, such as video, to avoid any direct visual contact between victims and offenders during testimony or evidence presentation.

"It was very painful to be face to face with that man" [aggressor] "I was very scared [...] My life was in panic" (Young person 1 | report of his experience as a victim in Court CAB Meeting #1)

- Avoiding Unnecessary Questioning About Private Life: Justice professionals require specific training to avoid irrelevant or intrusive questions about a victim's private

life. Clear guidelines should be established to ensure questions remain focused on criminal offenses.

- Hearings Without Public Presence: Current legislation allows for private hearings but does not make them standard practice for child victims. It is crucial to explicitly mandate this measure to protect children from undue exposure or stress.
- Audio-Visual Recording of Interviews: The audio-visual recording of all interviews during criminal investigations should be mandatory, enabling these recordings to serve as evidence in court. This reduces the need for children to repeat their testimony and minimises trauma. Statements for future reference (Article 24) allow victims to provide testimony outside the courtroom.

"It was very painful to be face to face with that man" [aggressor] "I was very scared [...] My life was in panic" (Young person 1 | report of his experience as a victim in Court CAB Meeting #1)

"I was a little scared because I didn't know what the outcome of the situation would be. Perhaps she could be heard in another room, being alone [before the judge] [...] There in the courtroom I was lost." (Young Person 1 | Reporting on his experience as a victim in Court Cab Meeting #1)

"The courtroom was very large. I felt scared and ashamed [when speaking to the judge during the hearing]. I was accompanied by my mother. He was the person I wanted to be with." (Young person 2 | report of his experience as a CAB Meeting #1) witness in the case of aggression against his mother by his stepfather

“The fact that Sofia goes to the Court to speak to the Judge makes her nervous and has difficulty explaining what is happening to her the pressure and nervousness increases. In Court you feel more pressure, but if you are in a room you don’t feel as much pressure, it’s not as rigid.” (Young person 3 | opinion of a young person with no experience with justice in a simulated situation CAB Meeting #2)

- Appointment of a Special Representative: Portuguese law allows for the appointment of a patron in cases of conflict of interest between the child and their caregivers. However, this should be expanded to include the mandatory appointment of a qualified representative or mediator to ensure the child’s best interests are upheld, especially in cases involving unaccompanied children or separated families.
- Access to Legal Representation: Children have the right to a lawyer under Portuguese law, but this is not always guaranteed unless explicitly requested. It should be mandatory for all child victims to have legal advice and representation throughout the judicial process, especially in cases of conflict with parental responsibility holders.
- Avoiding Institutionalisation: Institutionalisation is the last resort provided for as protective law in Portuguese law. Multidisciplinary teams should create individualised support plans, ensuring the child’s safety and well-being within a community or family context.
- Communication Support and use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC): It is essential to guarantee that communication accommodations are fully integrated into criminal proceedings without prejudice or bias. Specifically:
 - Ensure that courts provide children with disabilities access to their preferred augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) tools—such as speech-generating devices, picture-based boards, or communication apps—and treat testimonies delivered via AAC as equally credible to verbal testimony.
 - Provide real-time captioning, transcription, and relay services for children with hearing impairments, and supply portable assistive listening devices in courtrooms lacking built-in systems.

- Offer assistive technologies—screen readers, magnification software, and optical character recognition tools—to support children with visual or reading challenges.
- Engage qualified interpreters (sign language and tactile) and notetakers for children with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities.
- Train justice professionals in the effective use and configuration of assistive technologies, and avoid imposing unfamiliar devices that could hinder the child's ability to communicate.
- Adaptations to Hearing and Courtroom Procedures: Adopting procedural adjustments is key to ensuring the fair treatment and full participation of children with disabilities. Specific measures include:
 - Adaptation of Venues
 - All interview and hearing rooms should be accessible and welcoming, incorporating soft colours, comfortable furniture, and augmentative communication tools (e.g., visual aids, tablets).
 - Install ramps and elevators for children with mobility impairments, use height-adjustable desks, and ensure wheelchair-accessible pathways within courtrooms and other facilities.
 - Appropriate Waiting Spaces
 - Design waiting areas separate from those used by offenders, with protective screens or separate entrances, to reduce distress and prevent encounters with perpetrators.
 - Provide sensory-friendly waiting areas for children with autism or sensory processing disorders, including quiet zones and dimmable lighting.
 - Removal of Cloaks and Wigs
 - Judges and legal professionals should adapt their attire, removing cloaks and wigs where necessary, to make the environment less intimidating for children.
 - Train legal professionals to use non-threatening body language and to explain their roles in simple terms to reduce anxiety for children with intellectual disabilities.
 - Adjustments to the Pace of Proceedings
 - Extra time must be allowed for children to respond to questions, with breaks provided as needed. Questions should use plain, age-appropriate

language, avoiding compound or complex hypothetical scenarios or rapid-fire questioning for children with processing delays.

- Allow flexible scheduling to accommodate children with chronic health conditions or fatigue. Use visual timers to help children with attention difficulties understand time limits.
- Separate Building Entrances and Protective Screens
 - Provide separate entrances and exits for victims to prevent visual contact with offenders. Protective screens should be installed in courtrooms for added safety and comfort.
 - Ensure these separate routes are physically accessible, with clear signage and support staff available to guide children with visual or cognitive impairments.

How Diana Information System can support these accommodations efforts?

The Diana Information System (See Part II) can play a central role in operationalising and supporting the procedural accommodations. The Diana Information System (DIS) enables the systematic identification of a child's vulnerabilities—such as disabilities or psychosocial conditions—at the very first contact with the justice system (see Step 1: Identification of Risks, Vulnerabilities, and Barriers). This allows for timely, tailored responses rather than reactive ones. Through tools like the Vulnerability Assessment Questionnaire and the Procedural Accommodations Checklist (Annexes 3 & 4), Diana ensures that accommodations are standardised, documented, and regularly updated across proceedings (see Step 3: In-depth Needs Assessment and Procedural Accommodations). Diana's also integrated Chatbot and Resource Page offering to victims and family accessible information about rights, legal procedures, and available accommodations in plain language and with assistive formats. Finally, the DIS supports the creation of a Procedural Accommodation Document (PAD) and a Transition Plan (TP), ensuring continuity of care even after court proceedings, especially when monitoring offender release or other risk changes is needed.

02

PART 2
DIGITAL INFORMATION
SYSTEM FOR THE MODEL
MULTIDISCIPLINARY
COOPERATION SYSTEM

2.1 Proof of concepts: new solutions for victims with disabilities' participation in criminal justice

DIANA Portuguese System

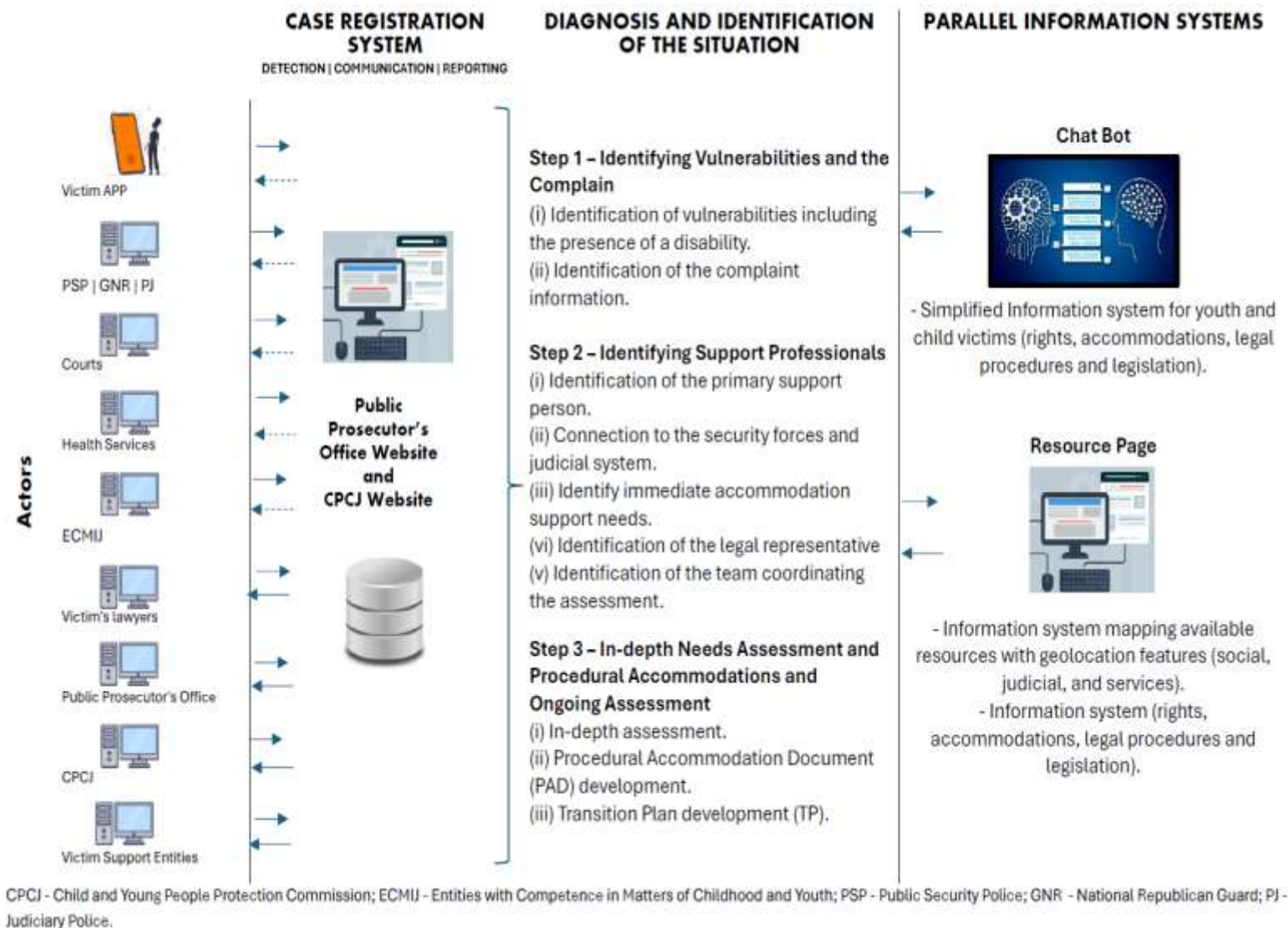


Figure 2 Diana Portuguese System

Every child has the right to clear, accessible, and reliable information, especially when they become victims of crime. However, navigating the justice system can be overwhelming, particularly for children, who may not fully understand their rights or what to expect during legal proceedings. This challenge is even greater for children with intellectual disabilities, who may require adapted communication to comprehend legal concepts and procedures.

The Portuguese *Diana Information System* (see Fig. 1) is designed to manage and centralise critical data on crime victims, with a particular focus on children with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities. Diana's purpose is to support risk assessments, facilitate procedural accommodations, and enable collaboration between multiple agencies. Most importantly, it is a powerful tool to facilitate access to information to the child, and where

relevant, family, of their rights, case and what will happen in proceedings. To achieve this, the system collects detailed information, including victim contact details, crime specifics (such as type, severity, and context), demographic data (age, gender, and disability status), family and socio-economic background, risk factors, and the procedural stage of the case.

The Diana tool is vital because provides comprehensive information on victims' rights, legal procedures, and available support services. It is integrated into the Portuguese Public Prosecutor's Office portal - under the "Information" section of the Family, Child, and Domestic Violence Office. The platform is designed to guide and support crime victims, ensuring they have clear, accessible, and reliable information. Will be accessible also through the Public Prosecutor's Office complaint portal (Cybercrime Office Portal), and the Child and Young People Protection Commissions' (CPCJ) portal.

The Diana toll is designed to provide simple and accessible information to all children who have been victims of crime. It ensures that they can independently seek out knowledge about their rights, the legal process, and the support available to them. The content is carefully structured with child-friendly language, making it easy to understand—even for young users with intellectual disabilities.

Beyond assisting children, Diana is also an essential resource for professionals who support child victims, equipping them with the knowledge needed to provide guidance, emotional support, and practical assistance. The website includes information on specialised resources, legal protections, and organisations that professionals can turn to for additional help.

Recognising that accessibility is crucial, Diana has been developed with inclusive features for users with visual and hearing impairments. This ensures that children who rely on assistive technologies, such as screen readers or sign language interpretation, can navigate the platform effortlessly.

Furthermore, Diana goes beyond simply providing information, it is a dynamic and interactive platform. A dedicated access area allows both victims and professionals to securely log in and track legal proceedings and enter new information updates. This ensures real-time engagement and transparency, making the justice process more comprehensible and participatory for all users.

Diana serves as a crucial resource for professionals working with victims, particularly those with intellectual disabilities. It offers guidance on how to provide better assistance, where to find additional support, and how to ensure that victims receive the legal protection and care they deserve. By empowering professionals with knowledge, Diana contributes to a more effective and compassionate justice system.

Thus, the website is structured to ensure that all individuals, whether victims or professionals—have access to essential information throughout the legal process. Justice thrives on knowledge, and Diana is committed to ensuring that no professional acts negligently due to a lack of information, and no victim is left unsupported due to a lack of awareness. For that purpose, Diana System has a *Parallel Information System* - a Chat Bot and a Resource Page.

2.1.1. Diana: Data Gathering

Diana pretends to integrate with existing systems used by law enforcement officers, child protection services specialists, and judicial authorities. In Portugal informatic systems has been developed, aimed at the digital transformation of the courts. In this context, different interfaces have been created that seek to respond to the shortcomings pointed out in the computer systems normally used by the entities that make up the justice system. However, these systems only cover the interface between structures of the justice system. Interoperability with the social, educative or health systems are not contemplated.

There are several complaint portals in Portugal, associated with the judicial system (see Annex 1 for a description of all portals), as well as one within the child protection system. The latter — the website of the Child and Young People Protection Commissions — includes a form for reporting situations of danger and is the only portal specifically designed for children and young people.

Where interoperability with existing judicial systems is not immediately feasible, and given Portugal's strict data protection laws that prohibit data sharing, the proposal is to host the Diana System on two of the main existing portals: (1) the Public Prosecutor's Office complaint portal (Cybercrime Office Portal); and (2) the Child and Young People Protection Commissions' (CPCJ) portal. While there would be no interoperability between systems — meaning that operators will continue to use their internal systems in parallel with the Diana application — users would be able to access Diana via these two established websites, where victims or other individuals can already file complaints.

The Diana System will thus operate independently yet be embedded within the child protection framework through its integration with the CPCJ's electronic platform, as well as within the judicial system via the Public Prosecutor's Complaint Portal. It will be a single system accessible through both portals.

It is proposed that the system be managed by CPCJ teams, as Portuguese law mandates that all cases involving minors fall under their jurisdiction. Accordingly, all digital complaint portals would redirect cases to the Diana System when one or both of the following conditions are met: (1) the victim is a minor; (2) the victim has a disability or a psychosocial issue. The proposal includes the creation of a centralised *Information Case Management System Form*, accessible to all reporting entities via the Diana System.

The “*Case Management System Form*” will identify vulnerabilities and will require information across several categories, including:

- Contact details
- Gender and age
- Disability and Health information (sensory, intellectual or psychosocial disability, etc.)
- Crime description:
 - Type of crime suffered (e.g. crime committed with violence against the person, in a domestic environment, with racial hatred, for discrimination, etc.)
 - Details of the crime (time, place, object, nature, species, means used to commit the crime)

- Type of relationship between the offender and the victim (e.g., marriage, cohabitation, kinship, partnership, neighbourhood, professional relations, etc.)
- Family status
- Education background
- Risk assessment factors
- Accommodations needed

(See attached Annex 2)

2.1.2 Diana: Case Management System

The data collected will be accessible in various ways and at different levels by users of the system, including victims. Access to this information—whether by judicial actors, external stakeholders, or victims—will be granted based on authentication and identification procedures. Due to Portugal's strict data protection laws, different users will interact with the Diana System in different ways, depending on their roles and permissions (see Table 1).

Different actors can report a victimisation situation by accessing the Diana System through either the Public Prosecutor's Office or the CPCJ websites. To proceed, they must sign in and identify their role—whether they are the Victim, Police Forces, CPCJ, Health Services, or an ECMJ entity. Once logged into the Diana System platform, they gain access to the “Case Management System Form” to register a case (see Annex 2). After submitting the complaint, they receive a case number for future reference.

Afterwards, these entities and the victim can access the Diana System using the case number. They will have access only to a specific set of fields that are open to ongoing updates—such as new crimes and new evidence—as well as information on the current stage of the legal proceedings.

Actions	Actors	Options for editing data / Accessible data
Case Registration	- Victim - Security Forces (PSP, GNR, PJ) - Health Services - Anti-violence centres	All fields into the “Case Management System Form”
Process consultation – limited information and data edition	- Victim - Security Forces (PSP, GNR, PJ) - Health Services - Anti-violence centres	- Insert new evidence - Insert New crimes - Stage of the legal proceedings
	- Lawyers authorised by the victim	- All data accessible - Insert new evidence

Process consultation – unlimited information		- Insert New crimes - Stage of the legal proceedings - Procedural Accommodation Document (PAD) - Transition Plan
Process consultation – limited information	- Prosecutor's office	- Access to editing data - All data accessible - Insert new evidence - Insert New crimes - Stage of the legal proceedings
Process consultation – unlimited information	- Courts	- Access to editing data - All data accessible - Insert new evidence - Insert New crimes - Stage of the legal proceedings - Procedural Accommodation Document (PAD) - Transition Plan
Process consultation – unlimited information	- Victim	- Transition Plan - Procedural Accommodation Document (PAD)

Table 1 - Actions, actors and accessible data in the DIS

2.1.3 Diana: Risk and Procedural Accommodation Assessment – Red Flags

The Diana System was designed not only to facilitate the reporting of victimisation but also to ensure that child victims with disabilities and psychosocial challenges receive timely, appropriate, and individualised support throughout the legal process. This section outlines the multi-step assessment and referral process embedded in Diana, which aims to identify risk factors, procedural accommodation needs, and the relevant professionals to support each case. By integrating legal, social, and health perspectives, Diana ensures that vulnerable victims are not only heard but also protected and empowered through a coordinated and inclusive response.

2.1.3.1- Step 1 Identifying Vulnerabilities During the Complaint Process

The process begins when a complaint is registered, capturing two key elements through the *Case Management System Form* (**Annex 2**):

- **Identification of vulnerabilities**, including disability and/or psychosocial conditions.
- **Collection of essential case details** relevant to the complaint.

Upon completion of the form, users receive a recommendation directing them to the *Diana Resource Page*. Suggested sections will be based on the type of disability or mental health condition identified, the selected accommodations, and the complainant's profile.

2.1.3.2- Step 2 Identifying Support Professionals

At this stage, the entity managing the Diana System initiates the following actions:

- **Identification of a primary support professional**
 - Whenever possible, specialists already familiar with the victim (e.g., psychologists, teachers, speech therapists) will be engaged.
 - Local disability organisations (e.g., Cerebral Palsy Associations or CERCI) will be contacted if necessary. If the victim is already supported by an organisation, that entity will designate a support person and coordinate accommodations.
- **Connection to security forces and the judicial system and definition of the Case Officer**
 - If the complaint was not filed by security forces, appropriate judicial and protection entities will be notified.
 - Protection cases will be handled by the CPCJ with necessary accommodations.
 - Criminal cases will be referred to relevant authorities (e.g., PSP, GNR, PJ, Public Prosecutor's Office, Legal Medical Institute).
 - The Public Prosecutor's Office or the Court decide who is the Case Officer (CO) - what institution or organisation should nominate a person.
- **Identification of immediate risks and accommodation needs**
 - Activation of accessibility resources (e.g., AAC, simplified language, physical accommodations).

- Provision of emotional and communication support (e.g., support person, adapted environment).
- **Identification of legal representation**
 - The designated lawyer is contacted.
- **Formation of the assessment coordination team***
 - This team includes the lawyer, a disability/mental health specialist, and legally required actors.
 - The *EMAT Team* (Multidisciplinary Technical Support Teams for Courts) is also engaged.

*In criminal cases, the Public Prosecutor and/or the Court appoint the assessment team, which includes professionals responsible for identifying vulnerabilities and ensuring necessary accommodations. All these actions are facilitated through the *Diana Information System*, which provides procedural guidance, regional support resources, and tailored communication strategies based on the victim's needs.

2.1.3.3- Step 3 In-depth Needs Assessment and Procedural Accommodations

At this stage, the crime is assessed as per legal requirements. Thus, in the case of a crime, it is the Public Prosecutor's Office and/or the Court that are responsible for appointing the team in charge of conducting the in-depth assessment. While this assessment may be carried out by police authorities responsible for specific aspects of the criminal investigation (such as the Judicial Police and the National Institute of Forensic Medicine), the *Diana Information System* plays a crucial role in identifying vulnerabilities and ensuring this process is adapted to the victim's needs through:

- **Comprehensive Vulnerability and Accommodation Assessments**
 - The *Diana System* provides tools for identifying vulnerabilities (**Annex 3**) and procedural accommodations (**Annex 4**).
 - Assessment data is securely stored, with access restricted based on user authorisation levels.
- **Procedural Accommodation Agreement**
 - Procedural Accommodation Document (PAD) development - Formal agreement outlining accommodation is established and stored in the system.
 - The PAD document is periodically reviewed to ensure continued relevance (See Part I | 1.2.3- Workflow for assessing and addressing needs and barriers – Step3).
- **Transition Plan**
 - Transition Plan (TP) development - Formal document wishes outlines post-case coordination by specifying how and when the victim will be informed of developments (e.g. sentencing, release), detailing safety measures, referrals to ongoing support services, and assigning clear responsibilities to each stakeholder to ensure continuous care and empowerment.

2.1.4 Diana: Expert System and Chatbot

2.1.4.1- ChatBot

This ChatBot is designed to offer initial guidance and relevant information to victims, as well as to those receiving the complaint, acting as witnesses, or accompanying a child or youth victim. It aims to provide clear and accessible information about the emotional impact of victimisation, the criminal justice process, victims' rights, and the support services available. The goal is to empower victims with the knowledge and resources they need to navigate the legal system more confidently. Below we present some of the sections we are considering including:

A. Victim of Crime: Consequences and Reactions

This section explains the potential emotional, psychological, and physical effects of victimisation, including: (i) Common emotional responses, such as disbelief, anxiety, flashbacks, sleep disturbances, guilt, anger, fear, mood swings, and depression; (ii) The psychological trauma associated with crime, often overlooked compared to physical and financial harm; (iii) Victim testimonies; (iv) Practical coping strategies to help victims regain control of their lives.

B. Understanding the Criminal Process

This section provides a step-by-step guide to the legal system, for example: What is Crime and How to Report It? (Definition of a crime and the importance of reporting it; Where and how to file a complaint; The Investigation Phase (Inquiry Phase); How evidence is gathered; (vi) Accusation, Case Dismissal, or Suspension; Possible outcomes of an investigation; The Instruction Phase (Optional Pre-Trial Phase); Advice on staying calm and effectively communicating testimony; Special considerations for individuals with intellectual disabilities; etc.

C. Key Figures in the Criminal Process

This section introduces the key roles involved in a criminal case: Victim; Judge; Public Prosecutor; Police; Justice Officials; Victim's Lawyer; Victim Support Specialists; Defendant; Defendant's Lawyer; Witness; Expert Witness; interpreter.

D. Crime Victims' Rights

This section outlines the rights of crime victims, including: Right to Information: Understanding legal rights and case status; Right to a Complaint Receipt: Acknowledgment of crime reports; Right to Translation Services: Ensuring accessibility for non-native speakers; Right to Victim Support Services: Access to psychological, legal, and social assistance; Right to be Heard: Active participation in legal proceedings; Rights if the Suspect is Not Prosecuted: Options for victims when a case does not proceed; Right to Mediation: Alternative dispute resolution; Right to Legal Protection: Free legal aid for eligible victims; Right to Compensation: Financial support for damages suffered; Right to Protection -Measures - Security and privacy protections; Rights of Victims with Special Protection Needs: Special considerations for vulnerable individuals; Rights of Victims in Another EU Country: Assistance for cross-border cases.

E. . Victim Support Services

This section provides information on key organisations and services that support child victims of crime, ensuring they have access to the help they need; General Victim Support Organisations – Services offering psychological, legal, and social assistance to all victims of crime; Healthcare Services – Medical and psychological support for victims, including specialised trauma care; Social Security Services – Financial and social aid programs available to child victims and their families; Crime Victim Compensation Commission – Information on compensation programs for victims of violent crimes; Organisations Supporting Children with Disabilities – Specialised services that provide assistance to child victims with intellectual, sensory, or physical disabilities, ensuring they receive adapted support, communication tools, and legal guidance tailored to their needs.

F. Useful Contacts and Resources

A directory of essential contact details for victims seeking assistance.

G. Glossary

A section explaining key legal terms to help victims better understand the justice process.

H. Resource Page

A dedicated Resource Page will map available services using geolocation features and will integrate all relevant information provided by the ChatBot. Through its geolocation function, the system will display the nearest support services based on the user's location.

See **Annex 5** for an example of the type of information available.

2.1.5 Diana: Internal Encrypted Secure Chat

The "Internal Encrypted Secure Chat" refers to the messaging feature integrated into the Diana System platform, allowing magistrates, judicial staff, and other authenticated users, including the victim to communicate confidentially. This will allow the exchange of communications in "two-on-one" or group chat.

End-to-end encryption: All messages are encrypted in the sender's browser and can only be read by the recipient, ensuring that not even the Diana System servers can access the content.

Authentication via digital certificate: Only users with valid credentials (Citizen Card or digital certificate issued by the Bar Association) can log in and participate in the chat, ensuring that only authorised parties access the conversations.

Direct integration into the workflow: The chat is embedded within the CITIUS work environment itself, allowing users to share documents, case notes, and coordinate actions without leaving the application.

2.1.6 Diana Inclusivity: Assistive technologies integrated to the system

To ensure accessibility and inclusivity for all users, particularly those with disabilities or psychosocial challenges, the Diana System incorporates a range of assistive technologies. These tools are designed to support effective communication, improve user experience, and ensure that victims can access information and services independently and with dignity. Key assistive features include:

- **Screen Reader Compatibility:** The system is fully compatible with screen readers, enabling blind or visually impaired users to navigate the platform and access content through audio output.
- **Keyboard Navigation and Voice Commands:** For users with limited mobility, the system allows full navigation via keyboard shortcuts and voice command options, ensuring a barrier-free experience.
- **Text-to-Speech and Speech-to-Text Functions:** These features support users who experience difficulties with reading or writing, allowing them to listen to content and submit information verbally.
- **Simplified Language and Easy-to-Read Mode:** To support users with cognitive disabilities or low literacy levels, the platform offers content in plain language and an easy-to-read version of key sections.

- **Customisable Visual Settings:** Users can adjust text size, contrast, and color schemes to suit their individual needs, supporting those with visual processing issues or visual impairments.
- **Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC):** For non-verbal users or those with speech impairments, the system integrates basic AAC tools such as pictograms, symbol-based communication options, and simplified visual prompts.

These assistive technologies are seamlessly integrated into the system's interface and are available from the moment a user accesses the Diana System, whether through the Public Prosecutor's portal or the CPCJ website. By embedding accessibility into its core design, Diana upholds the principles of universal design and ensures that no user is excluded from accessing justice and support services.

2.1.7 Diana: Cybersecurity

Blockchain technology may enhance database security by providing a decentralised, transparent, and tamper-resistant framework for storing and managing data.

The blockchain features improving security applied to Diana are:

- **Decentralisation:** Decentralisation regards the distributed Ledger. Instead of storing data on a single server or centralised database, blockchain technology distributes data across multiple nodes (computers) in a network. Each node has a copy of the entire blockchain, reducing the risk of a single point of failure.
- **Immutability:** Immutability refers to the tamper-resistant feature of block-chain, because once data is recorded on the blockchain, it becomes extremely difficult to alter. Each block of data is linked to the previous one through cryptographic hashes, creating a chain of blocks. If someone tries to change any data in a block, it will invalidate the hashes of subsequent blocks, alerting the network to the tampering.
- **Transparency and traceability:** Transparency and traceability is ensured by the open ledger. In many blockchain systems, the ledger is public, meaning that anyone can view the recorded transactions. This transparency can deter fraud and enhance trust in the system. Even in private blockchains, where access is restricted, the traceability of transactions is maintained among authorised participants.
- **Access control:** access control will be guaranteed through permissioned blockchain. In a permissioned blockchain, access to the network is restricted to authorised users. This ensures that only trusted parties can participate in the data management process, reducing the risk of unauthorised access.

As regards document flow, including chat and data exchange, in order to ensure a secure and reliable exchange of documents, Diana will involve a combination of technologies designed to protect integrity, confidentiality, authenticity, and availability of exchanges.

The following technologies will be integrated:

- Data encryption.
- Secure File Transfer Protocols that establish an encrypted link between a web server and a browser, ensuring that all data passed between them remains private.
- Content Filtering that monitors and control the transfer of sensitive documents based on pre-defined policies, ensuring that sensitive data is not accidentally or maliciously shared.
- Endpoint Protection that can be deployed on endpoints (e.g., computers, mobile devices) to monitor and control document exchange activities, preventing data breaches.
- Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) that can create a secure tunnel between the user's device and the internet, ensuring that all data, including documents, is encrypted during transmission, even over unsecured networks.

2.2 Conclusions

Many disabled children remain unaware of how to exercise their rights, such as filing a complaint or understanding judicial proceedings. The lack of accessible and comprehensible information exacerbates the underreporting of crimes and severely limits their ability to participate effectively in justice processes.

Furthermore, insufficient training for legal and justice professionals compounds these challenges. Many professionals lack specialised knowledge on how to communicate effectively with disabled children or adapt procedures to their specific needs. While some professionals take individual initiatives to foster more equitable conditions, the absence of structured, standardised guidance leaves much to personal discretion, resulting in inconsistent practices and outcomes. The complex legal language used in courts further creates a communication barrier, making it even more difficult for child victims with disabilities to fully understand and engage with the justice system.

The roundtables discussions focused on identifying key stakeholders and enhancing support systems for children with disabilities in the justice process. Participants

emphasised the importance of institutions working in child welfare—such as schools, non-profit organisations, resource centres (CRI), and early intervention teams—given their unique insight into the needs of children and their families. They noted that victim support structures like the CPCJ and DGRS are essential for providing continuous assistance during and after judicial proceedings.

Collaboration among justice, education, and health sectors was highlighted as crucial for better outcomes. Stakeholders underscored the vital role of lawyers and technical support staff in mediating between the victims and the judicial system, especially given the current bureaucratic and inflexible nature of legal processes. The discussions revealed that rigid procedures, re-victimisation through repetitive testimonies, and insufficient adaptations in the system contribute to additional stress for the children.

To address these challenges, the participants advocated multidisciplinary evaluations, specialised professional training in human rights and inclusive practices, and the development of standardised protocols. They recommended process adaptations such as accessible physical spaces, the use of alternative communication tools, and ensuring a child-friendly environment throughout the judicial process. Overall, the consensus was that enhancing inter-institutional coordination and legal frameworks for tailored process adaptations is key to ensuring that vulnerable children have a secure and effective path to justice.

Additionally, the proposed Diana System aimed to offer a solution to these identified issues. Although current legislation does not yet allow us to operate it as we would like, we believe this is a crucial first step. To ensure effective protection and inclusion of children with disabilities in the justice system, it is essential to adopt a structured and inclusive approach from the outset. Step 1 of the Diana System focuses on identifying risks, vulnerabilities, and barriers at the moment a complaint is made, setting the foundation for appropriate intervention. This includes gathering information on the child's disability, psychosocial context, and specific needs. Following this, specialised professionals—such as psychologists, speech or occupational therapists, and social workers—must be involved in the individual assessment process, as outlined in Step 2 of the Diana System (identification of support professionals). The system also addresses the need for targeted training for legal actors—judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and police—ensuring they are equipped to handle such sensitive cases with competence and empathy. In Step 3, the Diana System provides a structured process for conducting an in-depth assessment and defining procedural accommodations, allowing adequate time to prepare cases involving children with severe disabilities.

Moreover, the system supports strengthening interinstitutional collaboration between governmental and non-governmental stakeholders through its coordination of professionals and centralised Resource Page, which includes geolocated service mapping. Finally, the system promotes ongoing awareness and training for all justice professionals to foster a more inclusive, accessible, and child-centred justice system.

It is also worth noting that various actions of the LINK Project—such as the dissemination of technician training and the synergies created among services through round table discussions—will provide the necessary support and sustainability to build this path.

Furthermore, CAB meetings with young people with disabilities have been essential in hearing first-hand their experienced anxieties and in assessing the acceptability of the solutions presented in this model. At this stage of the process, it feels like we are merely taking the first steps, and this model remains unfinished—demanding both reflection and action. The insights gathered from roundtable discussions and CAB meetings need to be better integrated. Moreover, this model must be tested by those who navigate these complex systems daily while supporting children and young people who have experienced victimisation. Ultimately, the final judgment will come from individuals with disabilities or psychosocial challenges, as they are the ones who must rely on it.

If there is one lesson this journey has taught us, it is that people with intellectual disabilities possess a sharp and discerning sense of justice, especially when it comes to something as fundamental as defending themselves, being defended, and ensuring their protection is carried out with dignity.

Recommendations

Before concluding, we would like to summarise a set of recommendations that emerged from the lessons learned through the actions carried out in the development of this model.

Collaborate MORE

There is know-how but the information is not reconciled. The fact that we conducted two focus groups with professionals from various sectors — social services, health, education, and justice — that deal with child victims was essential for the development of an informed and reality-based project. We also became aware of the diversity of services and organisations within each sector.

We realised that when the child or young victim has a disability and/or mental illness, additional challenges arise — even for entities experienced in working with children and youth victims, who feel uncertain and lacking information to intervene appropriately. On

the other hand, organisations linked to disability report difficulties navigating the justice system and having their voices heard regarding the needs of these children and youth.

This leads us to this first recommendation. Building collaborative pathways between services and organisations is a key point. For example, joint training of professionals from various sectors in a given region seems to us a path to follow. It promotes awareness of each other's roles and allows for reflective sharing of knowledge and experience to result in more coordinated and effective actions.

Listen MORE

Children and young people have something to say. The three CAB (Children's Advisory Board) sessions with youth with intellectual disabilities revealed that these individuals have a strong sense of what they want and what works for them when they are victims. They are capable of delving into the subject if we give them the opportunity and time to be heard — and to listen to one another.

Children and young people should not be heard only occasionally; they should be active agents in an ongoing evaluation of the justice system for child and youth victims. It is recommended to have regular opportunities to listen to young people who have been through the justice system. Moreover, they should have time, with guidance, to navigate the situations in which they were victimised. Young people appreciate reflecting together, sharing their experiences, and knowing they are not alone in their emotional pain. Mutual help groups should be a normalised practice.

Regulate MORE

Strong collaboration ensures comprehensive care and protection for vulnerable victims. To ensure that the rights of child and youth victims are fully protected, it is imperative to strengthen the legal framework governing procedural accommodation and judicial processes. This recommendation emphasises the need to simplify bureaucratic procedures and introduce greater flexibility to address individual needs.

Some collaborative pathways and certain rights should be regulated by law — the transposition of rights from international guidelines must be formally regulated in our country. international guidelines must be transposed into Portuguese legislation to establish a clear legal framework for procedural accommodations. This includes mandating the presence of specialised professionals—such as psychologists and lawyers - in official records and guaranteeing every child access to legal representation and clear, age-appropriate information about their rights.

03

PART 3 CASE STUDY

3.1 Case study n°1

3.1.1 Reporting the incident

Paulo, a young man with cerebral palsy and limited verbal communication, is bullied in public—subjected to both verbal taunts and physical aggression. When he returns home, he tells his father what happened. Together, they access the Diana System (which Paulo had learned about through his vocational inclusion support centre) and use the embedded ChatBot for initial guidance. The ChatBot walks them through the process and confirms that they should complete the “Case Management System Form” to formally register the complaint.

3.1.2 Individual assessment

The following morning, Dr Ana from the Child Protection Commission (CPCJ) reviews the new complaint and classifies it as serious. She calls Paulo (on speakerphone with his father) to express concern and to collect additional details for the vulnerability assessment. Using the Diana form, she records Paulo’s intellectual disability and psychosocial needs, then asks which support professional he prefers. Paulo names two technicians from his association.

Dr Ana immediately alerts the Judicial Police (PJ), providing the Diana case number so they can flag Paulo as a particularly vulnerable victim. A hearing is scheduled that same afternoon at 15 h 30. She informs Paulo that, if needed, a specialist will visit him beforehand to fine-tune any accommodations.

Next, Dr Ana contacts the Public Prosecutor’s Office (MP), again sharing the Diana case number. The MP asks her to formalise a request for a free legal defender via Diana. Within minutes she has arranged for an available lawyer, who registers in DIS as Paulo’s counsel.

Finally, Dr Ana calls Paulo to confirm the PJ appointment—he will be accompanied by the chosen support technician and by her. She asks if he requires any specific accommodations. Paulo requests only his technician’s help with verbal communication. Dr Ana then liaises with the regional Cerebral Palsy Association, ensuring the technician is available.

Later that morning, the support technician visits Paulo to assess any remaining needs, then goes to the PJ station to confirm arrangements: a quiet, private room and extra time for testimony. She completes the Diana “Accommodations Checklist” .

3.1.3 Legal proceedings

- **Complaint** - At 15h30, Paulo, his father, his support technician, and Dr Ana arrive at the PJ station. Paulo formally files his complaint. The PJ immediately notifies the Public Prosecutor's Office.
- **Assessment Coordination Team** - Two days after the complaint the Public Prosecutor's Office establishes the Assessment Coordination Team:
 - Dra. Ana from CPCJ is de **Case Officer** and oversees Paulo's welfare and ongoing accommodations.
 - The technician from the Cerebral Palsy Association
 - PJ proceeds with the criminal investigation, including identifying and interviewing the alleged aggressor.

Throughout this process, Paulo and his father repeatedly revisit the Diana website—reviewing their rights, tracking the case stage, and installing the Diana mobile app for on-the-go updates.

- **Procedural Accommodation Document** - The Assessment Coordination Team prepares this document, which includes a recommendation for advance testimony (*audição para memória futura*) to be conducted in a safe and appropriate environment.
- **Hearing Paulo Without Courtroom Presence** - One week later, Paulo was called to give his testimony. The recording took place in a separate, child-friendly room at the court, designed to provide a safe and welcoming environment. Before the session, the judge met with Dr. Ana to review the accommodations plan, including the necessary adaptations to the questions. The judge shared that he had recently completed a one-day training provided by APAV and FENACERCI, which reassured Dr. Ana that they shared a common understanding and approach.
- **Judge's Decision** - A month later, through the Diana System platform, Paulo could see that the court ruling against the aggressor had been issued. That same day, his lawyer called him to explain the decision.
- **Transition Plan** - A few weeks later, the team met with Paulo to develop the Transition Plan. Before this meeting, Dr. Ana had already met with Paulo to jointly reflect on the key aspects to be included in the plan.

3.1.4 Support after the trial

Once the initial hearing concludes, the Diana System continues to support Paulo in line with the Transition Plan. Three key actions are highlighted:

- Ongoing**

Through the app, Paulo and his father receive automatic notifications about upcoming court dates, investigative developments, and any reviews or updates to procedural accommodations.
- Emotional**

and

Practical

Resources:

The ChatBot provides access to local counselling services (geolocated on the Resource Page) and peer support groups for young people with disabilities. Dr. Ana also schedules biweekly follow-up calls to monitor Paulo’s emotional recovery and adjust accommodations as needed.
- Reintegration**

and

Advocacy:

The CPCJ facilitator organises a school-based workshop on bullying prevention, engaging Paulo’s classmates in the process. Additionally, Diana’s “Lessons Learned” module invites Paulo—through his support technician—to provide feedback on the experience: What worked well? What could be improved? This input is used in CPCJ’s quarterly review to enhance practices.

By embedding Diana at every stage—from the first report through post-trial support—Paulo experiences a cohesive, accessible, and empowering justice journey. His vulnerability is recognised, his voice amplified, and his long-term well-being prioritised.

04

ANNEXES

4.1 Annex 1 Electronic portals that allow complaints and/or denunciations to be made remotely:

- Electronic Complaint Portals:

Created by Ministerial Order no. 1593/2007, of December 17, on the initiative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Electronic Complaint System allows complaints or denunciations to be submitted by nationals or foreign residents or present in Portugal electronically in relation to certain types of crime: simple physical harm; domestic violence, ill-treatment, human trafficking, pimping, theft, robbery; damage; scam, job or employment fraud; extortion; damaging or removing documents and technical notations; damage to nature; using someone else's identification or travel documents; pollution; aiding illegal immigration; recruiting illegal labour and marriages of convenience. As for the other crimes, you should follow the traditional route, going to or contacting the police authorities or the Public Prosecutor's Office, or through a court-appointed agent.

Subsequently, the citizen receives proof that the complaint has been lodged and the case is forwarded, depending on the situation in question, to the competent authority (GNR, PSP or AIMA - it should be noted that complaints or reports to the PJ are lodged on another electronic platform designated solely for this purpose) and the respective investigation begins. The portal also has an area where citizens can check the status of their complaint.

- Judicial Police Electronic Complaint Portal:

This portal allows victims of crime or anyone who has been made aware of them to submit a complaint electronically, by authenticating with their Citizen Card. Here, a form is provided to be filled in with relevant information such as the place of occurrence, the victims or possible witnesses, and it is possible to attach files, particularly images. Subsequently, the complaint is analysed by the PJ, which carries out the necessary procedural procedures, as is the case with complaints submitted in person or by telephone.

- The Judicial Police's anonymous reporting portal:

Denúncia Anónima – Polícia Judiciária Anonymous reporting allows citizens to provide the Polícia Judiciária with information about the preparation or commission of crimes without identifying themselves. This can be done on the PJ's website, which provides a form in which it is compulsory to identify the suspects, any victims, the place and date of the events and the facts in question (what, how, why, ...). Even so, it should be noted that, because it is anonymous, this type of complaint only leads to the opening of an inquiry (the investigation phase into the existence of a crime and its perpetrators) if there are genuine indications that a crime has been committed^[1]

- Portal of the Cybercrime Office of the Public Prosecutor's Office:

In the digital age in which we currently live, crimes that take place in a computerised or digital environment have become more and more significant, and therefore the investigation and production of evidence also requires the use of the same means. For this reason, the Public Prosecutor's Office has set up an office specifically for dealing with these cases, which seeks to communicate and coordinate with the various criminal police agencies, so that they can all be dealt with in a coherent legal framework, as well as with private entities that can be essential in these situations because of the information they have at their disposal, such as Internet providers or telecommunications companies. For this reason, an email address has been set up exclusively for receiving complaints about cybercrime: [.cibercrime@pgr.pt](mailto:cibercrime@pgr.pt)

- Ombudsman's portal:

Any Portuguese or foreign citizen can make a complaint to the Ombudsman about certain unjust or illegal acts carried out by public authorities, which will then be investigated and, if necessary, recommendations made or even a request for a review of the legality of rules by the Constitutional Court. This complaint can be made in person, by telephone or by traditional or electronic mail, but also using the form available at the Ombudsman's Electronic Desk.

4.2 Annex 2 Case Management System Form

4.2.1. Victim Information

a) Name (optional, if anonymity is preferred):					
b) Age:	☐ Under 5 years	☐ 5 to 8 years	☐ 9 to 12 years	☐ 13 to 17 years	☐ 18 years or older
c) Gender:	☐ Female	☐ Male		☐ Other / Prefer not to say	
d) Does the victim have any Disability or Mental Health Problem?	☐ Yes		☐ No		
☐ If yes, please specify:					

4.2.2. Complaint Information

Date of occurrence:	
Details of the crime (time, place, object, nature, species, means used to commit the crime):	
Brief description of the case (circumstances, parties involved, crime committed with violence against the person, in a domestic	

environment, with racial hatred, for discrimination, etc.):

Type of relationship between the offender and the victim (e.g., marriage, cohabitation, kinship, partnership, neighbourhood, professional relations, etc.):

4.2.3. Observations and Recommendations

Please use this space to provide additional information that may contribute to the appropriate referral and support for the victim, as well as suggestions for overcoming the identified barriers:

4.2.4. To ensure effective communication from now on, please indicate if any of the following accommodations are needed:

- **Simplified Language:**
 - ☐ Information and questions should be provided in plain, simple language.
- **Sign Language Support:**
 - ☐ A sign language interpreter is required.
- **Alternative Communication Methods:**
 - ☐ Use of alternative communication methods (e.g., written responses, visual aids, or augmentative and alternative communication devices) is preferred.
- **Extended Response Time:**
 - ☐ Additional time is needed to respond to questions.
- **Accessible Formats:**
 - ☐ Documents and materials should be available in accessible formats (e.g., large print, audio recordings).
- **Support Person or Advocate:**
 - ☐ The presence of a support person or advocate during the process is requested.
- **Comfortable and Private Environment:**
 - ☐ The process should be conducted in a quiet, private setting.

4.2.5 Referral Responsible Party Information

☐ I am the victim	☐ I am not the victim
a) Name:	_____
b) Position/Institution:	_____
c) Contact (email/phone):	_____

4.3 Annex 3 Vulnerability Assessment Questionnaire

4.3.1. Vulnerability Factors

Please evaluate, based on your perception or available information, the following aspects (using a scale: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree):

a) "Younger children have more difficulty verbalising situations of abuse and understanding legal procedures."	1	2	3	4	5
b) "Children with disabilities face additional challenges in reporting abuse."	1	2	3	4	5
c) "Social and ethnic factors (e.g., being from ethnic minorities or low-income backgrounds) increase vulnerability to victimisation."	1	2	3	4	5
d) If the victim is male, consider: "Masculinity stereotypes may lead to underreporting of abuse experienced."	1	2	3	4	5

4.3.2. Systemic, Social, and Cultural Barriers

Please indicate whether the following factors were identified as barriers to reporting or following up on the case:			Comments
a) Cultural barriers (e.g., practices such as early marriage with family consent):	☐ Yes	☐ No	
b) Social and family-related barriers (e.g., concealment of abuse in rural areas due to stigma or lack of trust in the justice system):	☐ Yes	☐ No	

c) Re-victimisation (the need for the victim to testify repeatedly in judicial proceedings):	☐ Yes	☐ No	
d) Rigidity of judicial procedures (lack of adaptation to the victim's individual needs):	☐ Yes	☐ No	
e) Communication barriers (lack of accessible materials, sign language interpreters, assistive technologies):	☐ Yes	☐ No	

4.4 Annex 4 Accommodations Checklist

4.4.1 Interviews and Communication

4.4.1.1 Interviews conducted by trained professionals

- Interviewers are qualified professionals trained to handle cases involving children and specific vulnerabilities.
- The child's preferred AAC devices are guaranteed, avoiding the imposition of unfamiliar tools.
- Testimonies delivered via AAC are considered as credible as verbal ones.
- Speech-generating devices, picture-based communication boards, and tablets with communication apps are available.
- Justice professionals are trained to effectively use AAC devices.

4.4.2 Courtroom Procedures and Adaptations

4.4.2.1 Consistency in interviewers

- The same professional is designated to conduct all interviews.
- The victim's preference for the gender of the interviewer is accommodated.
- Interview and hearing rooms are accessible, with soft colors, comfortable furniture, and visual communication tools.
- Ramps, elevators, and accessible routes are installed for children with reduced mobility.
- Sensory-friendly waiting areas with quiet zones and adjustable lighting are available.
- Judges and lawyers adapt their attire to reduce intimidation.
- Professionals are trained in non-threatening body language and provide accessible explanations of their roles.
- Videoconferencing and separate, accessible routes with clear signage are planned.
- Additional time for responses is provided, along with necessary breaks.
- Flexible scheduling is ensured for children with chronic conditions or fatigue.
- Visual timers are available for children with attention difficulties.

4.4.3 Questioning Techniques and Evidence

4.4.3.1 Avoiding irrelevant questions about private life

- Guidelines are followed to keep questions focused on the crimes committed.
- Equipment is arranged for recording all interviews.
- Recording devices are unobtrusive and introduced to the child beforehand.
- Leading questions are used when necessary, avoiding intrusive or overly complex hypothetical ones.
- Visual aids (e.g., storyboards) are included to facilitate understanding and responses.

4.4.4 Child Victim Support

4.4.4.1 Hearings without public presence

- Private hearings are confirmed as the standard practice.
- The child is guaranteed the right to be accompanied by trusted individuals, without replacing trained facilitators.
- Familiar objects or comfort items are permitted during proceedings.
- Assistive technologies (e.g., screen readers, magnification software) are available.
- Access to sign language interpreters, real-time captioning, and transcription services is guaranteed.
- Portable assistive listening devices are provided for courtrooms lacking built-in systems.

4.5 Annex 5 Diana Website - Resource Page

- Objectives:
 - Provide information on crime victims' rights and legal procedures.
 - Guide victims on how to report crimes and follow judicial proceedings.
 - Offer support resources, including relevant services and contact information.
 - Raise awareness about the impact of victimisation and the importance of specialised support.
 - Empower professionals with the knowledge needed to assist victims with intellectual disabilities effectively.

- Structure and Content:

A. Victim of Crime: Consequences and Reactions

This section explains the potential emotional, psychological, and physical effects of victimisation, including:

- Common emotional responses, such as disbelief, anxiety, flashbacks, sleep disturbances, guilt, anger, fear, mood swings, and depression.
- The psychological trauma associated with crime, often overlooked compared to physical and financial harm.
- victim testimonies
- Practical coping strategies to help victims regain control of their lives.

B. Understanding the Criminal Process

This section provides a step-by-step guide to the legal system:

- What is a Crime and How to Report It?
- Definition of a crime and the importance of reporting it.
- Where and how to file a complaint.
- The Investigation Phase (Inquiry Phase)
- How evidence is gathered.
- Accusation, Case Dismissal, or Suspension
- Possible outcomes of an investigation: moving to trial, case dismissal, or temporary suspension under specific conditions.
- The Instruction Phase (Optional Pre-Trial Phase)
- A review process where a judge evaluates whether the case should proceed to trial.
- The Trial Process
- Explanation of court proceedings, including presenting evidence, witness testimonies, and the roles of the prosecution and defence.
- Potential financial compensation for victims.

- The Sentencing Phase
- How the judge determines a verdict and possible penalties for the defendant.
- The Appeal Process
- How victims, defendants, or the Public Prosecutor can request a case review.
- Special Legal Procedures
- Different legal paths depending on the severity of the crime:
- Summary Process: For crimes where the suspect is caught in the act.
- Abbreviated Process: For less serious crimes with clear evidence.
- Simplified Process: A fast-track procedure for minor offenses.
- Tips for Victims and Witnesses Providing Testimonies
- Guidance on how to prepare for court appearances.
- Advice on staying calm and effectively communicating testimony.
- Special considerations for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

C. *Key Figures in the Criminal Process*

This section introduces the key roles involved in a criminal case:

- Victim
- Judge
- Public Prosecutor
- Police
- Justice Officials
- Victim's Lawyer
- Victim Support Specialists
- Defendant
- Defendant's Lawyer
- Witness
- Expert Witness
- Interpreter

D. Crime Victims' Rights

This section outlines the rights of crime victims, including:

- Right to Information: Understanding legal rights and case status.
- Right to a Complaint Receipt: Acknowledgment of crime reports.
- Right to Translation Services: Ensuring accessibility for non-native speakers.
- Right to Victim Support Services: Access to psychological, legal, and social assistance.
- Right to be Heard: Active participation in legal proceedings.
- Rights if the Suspect is Not Prosecuted: Options for victims when a case does not proceed.
- Right to Mediation: Alternative dispute resolution.
- Right to Legal Protection: Free legal aid for eligible victims.
- Right to Compensation: Financial support for damages suffered.
- From the offender.
- From the Portuguese State (for victims of violent crimes and domestic violence).
- Right to Protection Measures: Security and privacy protections.
- Rights of Victims with Special Protection Needs: Special considerations for vulnerable individuals.
- Rights of Victims in Another EU Country: Assistance for cross-border cases.

E. Victim Support Services

This section provides information on key organisations and services that support child victims of crime, ensuring they have access to the help they need.

- General Victim Support Organisations – Services offering psychological, legal, and social assistance to all victims of crime.
- Healthcare Services – Medical and psychological support for victims, including specialised trauma care.
- Social Security Services – Financial and social aid programs available to child victims and their families.
- Crime Victim Compensation Commission – Information on compensation programs for victims of violent crimes.
- Organisations Supporting Children with Disabilities – Specialised services that provide assistance to child victims with intellectual, sensory, or physical disabilities, ensuring they receive adapted support, communication tools, and legal guidance tailored to their needs.

F. Useful Contacts and Resources

A directory of essential contact details for victims seeking assistance.

G. Accommodations

Exhaustive list of accommodations cross-referenced with type of needs.

H. Glossary

A section explaining key legal terms to help victims better understand the justice process.

Diana is more than just an informational website—it is a comprehensive support system designed to ensure that all child victims of crime, regardless of their cognitive abilities or sensory impairments, have the means to access justice and protection. Through easy-to-understand language, adaptive functionalities for children with disabilities, and a secure interactive area for victims and professionals, the platform transforms the way information is provided and accessed.

For child victims, Diana offers a sense of clarity and control, guiding them through their rights and the legal system in a way they can comprehend. For professionals, it serves as a valuable tool for education and support, helping them provide informed, compassionate assistance to children in need.

By bridging the gap between victims and justice professionals, Diana strengthens the protection of children's rights, ensuring that no child is left without guidance, and no professional lacks the resources to help.

4.6 Annex 6 Roundtables Portugal

On the 16th of January of 2025 APAV and FENACERCI organised a roundtable in order to co-develop the National Multidisciplinary Cooperation System with all relevant professionals and key-stakeholders. The aim of the roundtable was to further explore with professionals the gaps and opportunities within the national context to enable effective access of children with disabilities to justice.

The roundtable counted with 28 professionals from all over the country, from the following areas:

Participants included representatives from organisations supporting people with disabilities, judicial and legal institutions, law enforcement, and victim support services, all of whom contributed valuable insights into the system's shortcomings and potential solutions.

The focus group included professionals from:

- Organisations supporting people with disabilities (CERCI Braga, CERCICA, Cerci Chaves, CERCI Flor da Vida, Cooperativa para a Educação e Reabilitação de Cidadãos Inadaptados de Peniche, Centro de Educação para o Cidadão com Deficiência de Mira Sintra, Escola Superior de Saúde do Alcoitão da Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa, CERCIAG)
- Judicial and legal institutions (Supreme Court of Justice, Public Prosecutor's Office, Directorate-General for Reintegration and Prison Services, Centre for Judicial Studies, Local Criminal Court of Viana do Castelo)
- Law enforcement (Judicial Police)
- Victim support services (Portuguese Association for Victim Support)



4.7 Annex 7 CAB Meetings

Three CAB meetings have been conducted to date, with 9 participants in the first and 7 in the third and second.

The first session saw active participation from all youth with disabilities, who engaged fully in the proposed dynamics and signed informed consent. Icebreaker activities and knowledge-sharing exercises helped build group cohesion and create a safe space for discussion. During an activity on defining “injustice,” bullying and unfair judgments were spontaneously mentioned. Emotional responses such as sadness, anger, anxiety, and fear were reported. The group then discussed strategies for managing these feelings, suggesting that victims talk to friends, trusted adults, or, when possible, even the aggressor, and develop self-defence strategies. Two youths shared personal experiences of being heard by a judge after incidents of violence, highlighting feelings of anxiety, fear, and shame associated with formal hearings. One participant noted that such hearings should ideally be conducted away from the aggressor’s presence. The session concluded with a brief evaluation, where participants described the experience using words like “emotion,” “learning,” “trust,” and “happiness,” and expressed willingness to attend another session.

In the second session, the group remained highly engaged. The session focused on “Sofia’s Story,” read in segments, followed by guided questions regarding her feelings, the appropriate method for recounting her experience, and what support she would need. Responses indicated that Sofia should tell her story in her own way, and if she struggles to speak, she should seek help from a trusted adult. Discussions also examined whether a psychologist or a parent should accompany her, with some participants favouring professional support to reduce pressure. The session further explored the logistics of the hearing process and the potential role of a dedicated app for case updates. In closing, participants completed the phrases “I feel...” and “I need...,” revealing a range of emotions and needs, from a desire for calm and autonomy to a call for enhanced support networks.

These sessions brought forward recommendations from youth, providing valuable input for improving support and communication processes.



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