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You have been the victim of a criminal offence. We would like to provide you with some information below.

Course of the criminal proceedings

You have received from the police the form "Criminal complaint for offences prosecuted on complaint/private action". This form allows you to file a complaint. By doing so, you become a private claimant in the proceedings. If you have not yet filed a criminal complaint, you have three months from the date of the offence to do so.

If you have filed a criminal complaint, the public prosecutor's office may call you in for (further) questioning. You may also be asked to attend a settlement hearing together with the accused person. The aim of these negotiations is to get the accused person to apologise to you and to agree to pay for any expenses you have incurred and, possibly, satisfaction. In return, you agree to withdraw the criminal complaint. If a settlement (= an agreement) is reached, the case will be closed. If you do not wish to settle, the public prosecutor's office continues the investigation. In the event the accused person admits the offence, or it can be proved, a conditional fine or a conditional prison sentence is usually imposed.

The public prosecutor's office decides

- whether the proceedings are discontinued, i.e. not pursued any further – for example in case the suspicion of an offence cannot be substantiated and there is insufficient evidence;
- whether the proceedings are concluded with a summary penalty order. The offender will be punished with a monetary penalty and you, as the victim, will receive a copy of the summary penalty order;
- whether the case is referred to a court (especially in the case of higher penalties). The court will then decide on the sentence and the financial claims (satisfaction and compensation).

The main rights of the victim in criminal proceedings

- You may be accompanied by a confidant for moral support during questionings. However, this person must not be a witness.
- You may request that there be no direct contact with the accused person throughout the criminal proceedings (including chance encounters in the corridor of the administrative building). This means that the questioning will take place in separate rooms with video transmission. The accused person's lawyer has the right to be present during your questioning.

- You will be informed of the offender's detention, escape, and release from custody, unless you explicitly object.
- With your consent, the victim support services can inspect the prosecution authorities' files.
- You can ask the public prosecutor's office to inform you of the sentence.
- By submitting a written request, you can ask the enforcement authority to provide you with the following information:
 - the date on which the sentenced person begins serving the sentence;
 - where and how the sentence is being served;
 - the conditional or definitive release;
 - the escape of a sentenced person and its termination.
- In criminal proceedings against sexual integrity, you can request that the public be excluded from the court hearing. However, the court can refuse your request.
- As a victim of an offence against sexual integrity, you are entitled to refuse to answer questions relating your personal privacy.
- As a victim of an offence against sexual integrity, you can request to be interviewed by a person of the same gender at the police station and at the public prosecutor's office, and for at least one member of the court to be of the same gender. Victims who speak a foreign language can also request an interpreter of the same sex.

Additional rights of minor victims

- The first interview must take place as soon as possible. It is conducted by a police officer who has been trained for this purpose. In addition, a psychologically trained person is present to observe the interview to ensure that it is conducted in a child-friendly manner.
- The questioning is videotaped. However, this may be waived for certain offences.
- As a general rule, children should not be interviewed on more than two occasions.
- If it can be assumed that the child is suffering severe psychological distress, a face-to-face meeting must not take place. The accused person and his or her defence lawyer may then only ask questions through the police officer.
- Children under the age of 15 at the time of the interview are questioned as persons providing information. They are not obliged to give a statement.

Please note that different rules apply to criminal proceedings for minor offenders, as criminal proceedings for minors apply.

Medical expenses

Medical expenses include the cost of medical services, hospital treatment, outpatient bills and other medically prescribed therapies such as physiotherapy or psychotherapy. If you work or are registered with an unemployment insurance fund, you must submit these invoices to your employer's accident insurance or unemployment insurance fund. To do this, you must submit an accident report to your employer or the unemployment insurance fund. In all other cases, you must submit the invoices for medical expenses to your health insurance fund.

Medical costs that are not covered by any insurance or by the offender, can be paid for by the victim support services.

Claims for damages and satisfaction

If you want to claim damages and satisfaction from the offender(s), you can do so as a civil claim in the criminal proceedings. To do this, you need to position yourself as a private claimant at an early stage in the criminal proceedings. Make a list of the expenses, including receipts, and present this at the interview.

Damage and costs caused by the offence may include:

- damaged or destroyed clothing and footwear
- loss of salary or income
- telephone and travel expenses
- costs not covered by health or accident insurance

Satisfaction, known as damages for pain and suffering, is possible in the event that

- physical and/or psychological damage caused by the offence continues;
- professional and/or private restrictions remain;
- the healing process was very painful, exceptionally long or exceptionally difficult.

Deadlines for compensation and satisfaction from the victim support services

If you are entitled to compensation and/or satisfaction which has not been paid because the offender is unknown or unable to pay, these claims may be covered by the victim support services.

Please note: These claims must be submitted to the victim support services within 5 years of the date of the offence, or they lapse. Anyone who was a victim of certain serious offences as a child can make a claim up to their 25th birthday. After that, they are no longer eligible.

We will be pleased to give you further information by phone or in person. Free of charge and confidential!