

# Guidelines and best practices for emerging survivor organisations

---

## Purpose

This document aims to provide comprehensive guidelines and best practices for establishing and operating survivor organisations in the EU.

## Audience

This document is intended for individuals and groups seeking to support survivors of violence, abuse, and trauma through structured and effective non-profit organisations.

---

## What are survivor organisations?

Survivor organisations play a critical role in providing support, advocacy, and resources to victims of violence and abuse. They help survivors navigate their healing journey, advocate for their rights, and work towards systemic change.

Survivor organisations are entities that provide support, advocacy, and resources for individuals who have experienced violence, abuse, or trauma. This includes organisations focused on domestic violence, sexual abuse, human trafficking, and other forms of trauma.

### Types of survivor organisations

#### **Non-Profit Organisation (NPO)**

Formal organisations with a structured governance model.

#### **Support Groups (SG)**

Informal groups providing peer support.

#### **Advocacy Networks (AN)**

Coalitions that advocate for policy changes and systemic reforms.



## EU requirements and compliance

All survivor organisations in the EU are encouraged to read and adhere to official national and EU requirements. The recommendations outlined in this document should never impact your ability to comply with EU regulations; *if they do, you should prioritize compliance.*

### **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**

All organisations must comply with GDPR to protect personal data.

[GDPR information](#) Official EU page providing comprehensive information on the GDPR law and its implications.

[GDPR compliance guidelines](#) Detailed guidelines and resources for organisations to ensure compliance with GDPR.

[ICO: guide to GDPR](#) A comprehensive guide by the UK Information Commissioner's Office on implementing GDPR.

[EDPB guidelines](#) Guidelines and recommendations by the European Data Protection Board for GDPR compliance.

---

### **Transparency and accountability**

Organisations must maintain transparent financial records and reporting.

[EU funding & tenders portal](#) The official portal for accessing information on EU funding, tenders, and related opportunities.

[OECD principles of governance](#) OECD guidelines promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity in corporate governance.

### **European Union Agency on Fundamental Rights (EUFRA)**

All nonprofit organisations must register with the EUFRA.

[EUFRA portal](#) Portal for registering with the EUFRA, facilitating cooperation and compliance for civil society organisations.

*To learn more about specific country requirements and read the [Global Nonprofits Guide](#) by the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law, [click here](#).*

## A. Establish the foundation

This section provides a step-by-step guide for how to successfully establish your organisation.

### A1. Draft your mission, vision, and values

Before you think about logistics or operations, pause to define your mission, vision, and values.

#### Mission

A statement describing what the organisation needs to do to achieve the vision

#### Vision

A statement of an organisation's overarching aspirations of what it hopes to achieve or to become

#### Values

A statement defining what the organisation believes in and how the team is expected to behave

### A2. Consider your strategy and objectives

It is important to establish a well-defined strategy and follow it. Your strategy serves as a blueprint, guiding your organisation toward its goals within a specified timeframe.

*Strategies do not have to be complicated, especially for a new organisation.*

- Build off your mission, vision, and values.
- Begin by setting specific, short-term goals that build to your larger objectives.
- Identify the necessary resources and individuals required for the success of each goal.
- Think about key stakeholders, beneficiaries of your programs, potential partners, and donors/funding sources.
- Review your existing costs and budget constraints.

By developing a clear strategy and well-defined objectives, you empower your organisation to deliver impactful and sustainable change.



### A3. Determine your legal structure

While you can begin taking action right away, you should begin thinking about how you want to legally set up your organisation. This process may feel overwhelming, but there are many great lawyers, consultants, and partners in the ecosystem who can help.



**Attorneys**



**Accountants**



**Consultants**



**Nonprofit leaders**

We recommend engaging a professional to determine the best legal structure for your needs, but you can begin exploring options on your own.

#### Here are several questions to help you get started...

- **What type of nonprofit entity** is most appropriate for my organisation's mission and goals (e.g., charity, foundation, NGO, etc.)?
- **What are the legal requirements** for registering a nonprofit in the country where the organisation will be based?
- **What governance structure** is recommended or required for nonprofits in my country (e.g., board of directors, trustees, officers)?
- **What are the tax implications and benefits** for nonprofits in my country, and how can the organisation maintain tax-exempt status?
- **What are the ongoing compliance, reporting, and operational requirements** for nonprofits in my country?

*To learn more about setting a legal structure from the Council of Nonprofits, [click here](#).*

## A4. Register your organisation

This is a significant step that helps you gain legal recognition and establish credibility with donors, beneficiaries, and partners. It enables your organisation to access tax exemptions, apply for grants, and ensure compliance with regulations.

Requirements to register may vary, but there are several foundational steps you can take:

Ensure you have the **required minimum number of founding members**, usually at least three.

**Draft a constitution or bylaws** that outline the governance structure, membership rules, and meeting procedures.

**Hold an inaugural meeting**, known as the founding assembly, to adopt the bylaws and elect the initial officers.

**Prepare and submit the registration application** to the appropriate national or regional authority.

### **Key founding documents should include, at a minimum:**

A list of founding members  
A list of officers and titles

Proof of address for the organisation  
Application forms by the registering authority

## A5. Legal and tax compliance

Make sure your organisation is legally sound, so you can continue to take action. While there are many accessible materials online, we encourage all organisations to check with a professional whenever possible to ensure your legal and tax compliance.



### **Legal status**

Obtain legal status by registering with the relevant government body (e.g., a national registry of associations or a local court).



### **Tax exemption**

Apply for tax-exempt status. This often involves proving that your NPO operates exclusively for charitable, educational, scientific, or similar purposes.



### **Financial reporting**

Establish accounting practices to ensure compliance with financial reporting requirements. Regular audits may be necessary.

**To find legal and tax requirements for your country, [click here](#) to use a resource by the Council of Foundations.**

## B. Set up your governance

### B1. Core components

There are several elements of good governance that apply to nearly every organization and can be considered “core components” – it is a best practice to include these core components in all organizational governance documents:



#### **Leadership structure**

Establish procedures for electing leaders, set term lengths and rotation systems. Clearly define responsibilities for accountability. Include mentorship programs for grooming future leaders.



#### **Process for adding new members**

Lay out steps for your organization to add new members. Establish membership qualifications for all current and future members to ensure fair participation. Explain how prospective members can reach out or join the organization.



#### **Required policies**

Implement policies like a code of conduct or safeguarding policy and establish removal procedures for policy violations. Review and update policies regularly to align with country regulations and current best practices.



#### **Clear goals and objectives**

Define clear goals and objectives. Establish a vision and mission for your organization to guide its purpose and scope. Regularly meet with your team and key stakeholders to align on goals.



#### **Communication**

Plan how to maintain communication within the organization (e.g., chats, emails, meetings). Set protocols for updates and feedback to keep all informed and engaged. Use communication tools for inclusivity.



#### **Fiscal responsibility**

Offer concise financial management guidelines, covering budgeting, fundraising, and reporting. Conduct regular audits to ensure policy compliance and pinpoint areas for enhancement. Cultivate financial literacy to empower members.

## B2. Participation agreement

A Participation Agreement is a set of policies and procedures that non-staff members agree to abide by when working with the organization through contracting or volunteering. A participation agreement typically includes a code of conduct, child safeguarding policy, and privacy policy.

Additionally, a participation agreement should include a process for removal if someone breaches any of the policies listed in the agreement.

Common elements of a participation agreement				
Code of conduct	Child safeguarding policy	Privacy policies	Values and community agreements	Ways of working
Process for removal				
Conflict mediation				

## B3. Mechanisms for collaboration

Collaborating with other organizations and survivor advocates provides an opportunity to share knowledge, build community, and exchange resources. Organizations can develop clear channels of work through defined working groups or task forces.

	Working groups	Task forces
<b>WHAT</b>	Ongoing groups of organizations or individuals dedicated to a specific area of work.	Time-bound and focused on a specific campaign or initiative with clear deliverables or goals
<b>BENEFITS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information-sharing</li> <li>• Capacity-building</li> <li>• Strategic planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinated communications</li> <li>• Agile information-sharing</li> <li>• Aligned activations or events</li> </ul>
<b>EXAMPLES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy working group</li> <li>• Communications working group</li> <li>• Fundraising working group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online safety campaign task force</li> <li>• EU CSA regulation task force</li> <li>• Statute of limitations task force</li> </ul>

***Anytime you collaborate, you should do so in a structured way.  
Use recurring meetings, governance guidelines,  
ways of working, and regular communication.***

## C. Organisational policies and procedures

There are many unique considerations when creating a survivor organisation. After all, the work we do involves engaging directly with trauma and individuals who have experienced it.

By taking the time to create clear and equitable policies and procedures, we are showing that we care about making a lasting difference.

Below are several types of policies and procedures that you may draft. You may find guidelines and draft templates later in this document.

<b>Child &amp; youth protection policies</b>	<b>Survivor policies</b>	<b>Digital policies</b>	<b>Organisational policies</b>
Child safeguarding policies	Disclosure and listening guidelines	Data protection policy	Code of conduct
Child participation guidelines	Self-care and healing guidelines	Privacy policy	Confidentiality policy
	Safety guidelines	Social media and brand guidelines	Whistleblowing policy
			Standard operating procedures
			Anti-bullying and harassment policy
			Records retention and destruction policy
			Conflict of interest policy

## D. Financial management and fundraising

You care about the work you do, and you want to continue making a difference for as long as possible. To do this, you need a sustainable approach to financial management and fundraising.

***Budgets and financial plans do not have to be difficult***, especially for new organisations. At their core, budgets let you know what you can and cannot do, and they help you plan and report on your efforts.

There are many best practices to help you build effective budgets and financial plans.

### **Budgeting + financial planning**

Create sustainability for your work.

[Strong Nonprofits toolkit](#)  
[Nonprofit financial report template](#)

### **Accountability + transparency**

Protect your funds  
and report your progress

[Internal controls for Not-for-Profit  
organisations](#)

***Fundraising does not have to be difficult, either.*** While there is not as much funding available to address this issue as there should be, more donors (both institutions and individuals) are beginning to fund survivor organisations. There is an exciting opportunity here.

There are many best practices to help you fundraise more strategically and efficiently.

### **The Brave Movement has developed a fundraising toolkit.**

Targeted to survivor organisations, this toolkit can help you implement best practices, build more funding streams, and reach more donors.

Learn more today!

[Fundraising toolkit for survivor organisations](#)

## E. Trauma-informed approach

All organizations working with survivors should adopt a trauma-informed approach. A trauma-informed approach is defined as a framework that involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma. This approach emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both survivors and providers, and helps survivors rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.

Practicing a trauma-informed approach can look like:

### Creating a safe environment

Ensure the space is welcoming and secure, with comfortable seating, warm lighting, clear exits, and privacy for conversations. Foster an emotionally safe space where survivors feel respected and valued.

### Building trust

Develop and communicate transparent policies and procedures.

Be consistent in actions and responses, respect confidentiality, and obtain informed consent before sharing any information.

### Collaborating and empowering

Involve survivors in decision-making about their care, provide choices, respect their autonomy, and help them build on their strengths with opportunities for skill development.

### Cultural competence

Respect and recognize diversity, understanding that cultural backgrounds influence trauma experiences and expressions. Ensure services are culturally sensitive and tailored to diverse needs.

### Understanding trauma responses

Educate staff on trauma's impact on health and behavior. Train them to respond appropriately without judgment to trauma-related behaviors and reactions.

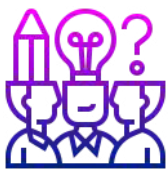
### Supporting staff

Support staff with regular supervision, professional development opportunities, and resources for managing secondary traumatic stress to maintain their well-being and quality of care.

***By integrating these principles into everyday practice, organizations can foster a supportive and effective environment for survivors to heal and thrive.***

## F. Survivor engagement mechanisms

It is crucial to integrate survivor voices, experiences, and perspectives into the organization's governance. Sharing one's survivor experience is a deeply personal choice with significant implications, and organizations should be inclusive of both public and non-public survivors, individuals with lived experience, and all allies.



### **Participating in a task force:**

Survivors can lend their expertise and insights to help shape Brave Movement policies and campaigns. Task forces are short-term groups formed at the global and regional levels to conduct a campaign, produce a deliverable, or take action.



### **Contributing to Brave Movement resources and materials:**

Survivors can contribute to the production of certain official resources and materials by requesting topics to be covered, participating in interviews, delivering feedback, joining roundtable discussions, and more.



### **Sharing lived experience publicly:**

Survivors can share their experiences through an approved Brave Movement campaign as part of a focused plan of action. They can also share perspectives outside the movement, as long as it aligns with the Code of Conduct.



### **Speaking at an event or activation:**

Survivors can share their stories at conferences, workshops, campaign events, or public forums. They may speak on specific topics but are urged to be genuine and speak in their own voice.



### **Participating in documentary projects or campaign films:**

Survivors can share their stories in documentary projects to inspire empathy and societal change. Multiple feedback rounds during filming empower survivors to shape their narrative.

## G. Survivor advisory councils

Some survivor organizations may choose to create an advisory council of survivors to provide expertise, key perspectives, and additional validity in public decision-making. Other survivor organizations may ensure representation of survivors within organisational decision-making bodies.

Regardless of how organizations may engage survivors, there should be established ethical, trauma-informed pathways for survivor engagement.

### G1. Benefits of a survivor advisory council



**Key perspectives**



**Public validity**



**Expertise**



**Passion**

### State-based survivor councils

Governments are increasingly looking to establish official survivor councils that help to advise and direct policies related to childhood sexual violence, as well as other forms of child abuse and neglect.

**Our guidelines are solely for survivor organisations, coalitions, or partnerships that are establishing these councils.**

*If you are interested in learning more about state-based survivor councils and the Brave Movement's involvement, please contact the Movement Action Team.*

## G2. Best practices to establish a survivor council

- **Define purpose and goals:** Create a Terms of Reference to clearly articulate the council's mission, objectives, and desired outcomes, ensuring alignment with the organization.
- **Recruit diverse members:** Seek members with varied backgrounds and experiences, considering factors like age, gender, race, ability, and type of trauma experienced.
- **Develop clear roles and responsibilities:** Outline roles and expectations for council members, providing written guidelines and a code of conduct to ensure clarity.
- **Provide training and support:** Offer training on advocacy, leadership, and organizational processes, along with resources for emotional support and self-care.
- **Establish transparent processes:** Develop transparent procedures for decision-making, conflict resolution, and communication, regularly updating members on progress and outcomes.
- **Facilitate open communication:** Create a safe space for open dialogue, encouraging honesty and mutual respect through regular meetings, feedback sessions, and surveys.
- **Ensure confidentiality and privacy:** Protect the confidentiality of council members and their experiences with clear guidelines for handling sensitive information.
- **Promote shared leadership:** Encourage shared decision-making and leadership within the council, rotating roles to distribute responsibilities and prevent burnout.
- **Acknowledge and respect contributions:** Recognize the value of members' time, expertise, and experiences, providing compensation, stipends, or other forms of appreciation.
- **Evaluate and adapt:** Regularly assess the council's effectiveness, solicit feedback to identify areas for improvement, and celebrate successes.
- **Integrate council insights:** Ensure the council's recommendations and insights are integrated into policies and practices and share how their input has influenced decisions and changes.

*For more detailed guidance on establishing a survivor council in your organization, read this [resource](#).*

## H. Engaging anonymous survivors

Some survivors choose to remain anonymous for a variety of reasons. It is important that organizations respect this decision and provide meaningful engagement opportunities that do not compromise their personal identifying information.

Organizations partnering with anonymous survivors should uphold strict security measures and policies that ensure safety while participating in activities. Potential activities include sharing an anonymous survey or asking for feedback on a policy document.

### Tips to engage anonymous survivors

- **Data management and security:** Implement stringent protocols to securely manage and store sensitive information, including encryption and restricted access, to prevent unauthorized access and protect survivors' anonymity and confidentiality.
- **Secure communication channels:** Utilize encrypted communication platforms and anonymous reporting systems to ensure that survivors can communicate safely without fear of their identity being compromised. This includes using technologies that anonymize IP addresses and other identifying information.
- **De-identification:** Remove or anonymize personal identifiers from data and records whenever possible to protect survivor privacy. This might involve using codes or pseudonyms instead of real names in documentation and reports.
- **Informed consent:** Clearly explain the purpose, risks, benefits, and potential uses of any information provided by survivors. Ensure they understand how their data will be used and shared, and obtain explicit consent before collecting any identifiable information or proceeding with any intervention.
- **Voluntary participation:** Respect survivors' autonomy by allowing them to decide whether and how much information they wish to disclose or participate in activities. Avoid any pressure or coercion to engage, ensuring that participation is entirely voluntary and based on the survivor's comfort level and readiness.

## I. Expanding visibility and increasing impact

Once you have laid the groundwork for your organisation, consider how you may increase the reach and impact of your efforts. When you expand your visibility, you can do more. You can secure more funding. You can find more partners. You can reach more supporters. You can deliver more impact.

This is especially true for survivor organisations – your greatest value add is the public’s awareness that you are leading your work as survivors. ***By safely expanding your visibility, you increase your impact.***

Below are several examples of how you can expand the visibility and reach of your organisation:

### Advocacy and awareness



Use advocacy strategies to raise awareness of the issue. Advocacy is not just limited to politics; it is broader.

For example, you may develop a public-awareness campaign on preventing childhood sexual violence in schools and advocate for child safeguarding policies in educational settings.

### Capacity building and training



Offer comprehensive development opportunities for staff and volunteers to enhance their skills and effectiveness.

Use the [Capacity assessment questionnaire](#) to identify needed tools and resources and implement strategies to build organisational capacity and resilience.

### Sustainability and growth



Demonstrate commitment to sustainability and growth by developing a strategic plan with measurable goals, securing funding sources, and conducting regular progress reviews.

Foster a culture of creativity and innovation to stay relevant, and prioritize succession planning to ensure organisational continuity.

### Partnerships



Form strategic partnerships with other organisations and individual leaders to coordinate, share resources, and amplify your overall impact.

Collaborate on joint initiatives, share expertise, and leverage each other’s strengths to achieve common goals.

## Conclusion

Establishing a survivor organisation is a vital and rewarding endeavor that can significantly impact the lives of individuals who have experienced violence, abuse, and trauma.

***YOU are making the world a better place through survivor leadership.***

By following the comprehensive guidelines and best practices outlined in this document, you will be well-equipped to build a strong foundation for your nonprofit organisation.

Begin by defining your mission, vision, and objectives, and determine the most suitable legal form for your NPO. Ensure you meet all legal and tax compliance requirements, and establish robust organisational policies and procedures to maintain integrity and support trauma-informed care.

Develop clear financial management and fundraising strategies and adhere to EU regulations, particularly regarding data protection and transparency. Recognize that you can rely on experts, partners, or supporters to help with this process.

Engage in advocacy campaigns, awareness programs, and capacity-building initiatives to further enhance your organisation's reach and effectiveness. Embrace long-term planning, innovation, and succession planning to ensure sustainability and growth.

---

As you embark on this journey, remember that ***your efforts will provide invaluable support, advocacy, and resources to survivors*** – helping them navigate their healing journeys and advocating for systemic change.

Your dedication to this cause can create lasting, positive change in your community and beyond.

Stay motivated, remain resilient, and know that your work is making a difference.

Together, we can build a world where survivors are empowered, supported, and heard.

***Together, we can be brave so that children can be safe.***

## Resources and support

Additional resources	
<b>Organisational structure and design EU</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Strong Nonprofits Toolkit</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Nonprofit Financial Report Template (National Survivor Network)</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Internal Controls for Not-for-Profit Organizations</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>How to build a Strategic Plan</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Nonprofit Strategic Planning</u></a></li> </ul>	<b>Requirements and compliance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>GDPR Information</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>GDPR Compliance Guidelines</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>EU Funding &amp; Tenders Portal</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>EU Agency on Fundamental Rights Portal</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Global Nonprofits Guide</u></a></li> </ul>
<b>Survivor engagement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>WPGA Participatory Survivor Mapping</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Toolkit for Building Survivor-Informed Organizations</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Meaningful Engagement of People with Lived Experience</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>A Guide to Meaningful Survivor Engagement</u></a></li> </ul>	<b>Additional resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Sample Organizational Bylaws</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>Program Plan Template (National Survivor Network)</u></a></li> <li>• <a href="#"><u>European Child Sexual Abuse Legislation Group (ECLAG)</u></a></li> </ul>