

17 May 2025

Finland: National Report ILAG Harvard 2025

1. Country details:

In 2024, Finland's population was 5.637 million and its gross domestic product (GDP) € 276 billion (per capita € 40,553).

The legal aid system used in Finland is known internationally as a mixed legal aid model. Legal aid services employ both public and private service providers. This means that a person entitled to state-funded legal aid can choose whether he or she wants to use the services of a public or private lawyer. No distinction of primary v. secondary legal aid services can be made.

The state legal aid offices employ around 200 public legal aid attorneys and around 166 legal aid secretaries. About half of the public legal aid attorneys are members of the Finnish Bar Association. In Finland, there are around 2,300 attorneys-at-law (members of the Bar) and around 1,700 licensed trial counsels who handle legal aid cases. This means that there are altogether around 4.000 lawyers providing legal services.

2. Legal Aid Organisation / Authority:

Legal aid is governed by two legislative acts:

- Act on the National Legal Services Authority
- Legal Aid Act

and three decrees:

- Ministry of Justice Decree on Locations of the National Legal Services Authority
- Government Decree on Legal Aid and
- Government Decree on Legal Aid Fee Criteria.

The Ministry of Justice is responsible for the overall management and supervision of the legal aid offices. The National Legal Services Authority was established at the beginning of year 2025. The agency consists of central administration and legal aid and legal aid and public guardianship offices. The establishment of the authority is considered to allow for a more efficient and coherent development and better resourcing of activities than the previous system. The central administration of the National Legal

Services Authority, which operates in several locations, provides centralised support and administrative services for the offices and develops the authority's activities. The Ministry of Justice continues to take care of the government-level tasks that fall under it, such as the budgetary procedure of the administrative branch, strategic guidelines and the drafting of legislation.

With an area of about 340,000 km², Finland has 23 legal aid offices, which are located mainly in the vicinity of the district courts. The legal aid offices have 153 locations of which around half are service points where clients are met as required. The legal aid offices are small: they have between 2 and 30 employees. The total number of employees is only around 366 of whom 200 are public legal aid attorneys and 166 legal aid secretaries who help legal aid customers and attorneys working in office. Applicants for legal aid may choose which legal aid office they wish to use.

Legal aid is administered by legal aid offices and courts. Legal aid is granted by the legal aid offices. If a legal aid office does not accept a legal aid application and deems that there is no reason for a rectification, the application may be submitted to a court for consideration. If the court does not grant legal aid, it is possible to appeal against the decision.

Legal aid is provided at the expense of the state to persons who need expert assistance in a legal matter and who are unable to meet the costs of proceedings as a result of their financial circumstances. Legal aid covers the provision of legal advice, the necessary measures and representation before a court of law and another authority, and the waiver of certain expenses related to the consideration of the matter. Legal aid is not provided to a company or a corporation.

The State will not compensate the opposing party for his or her legal costs in the event that the recipient of legal aid loses the case. If the party opposing the legal aid recipient would be liable to compensate in full or in part for the recipient's legal costs (by virtue of the Code of Judicial Procedure, the Criminal Procedure Act or the Act on Administrative Judicial Proceedings), that party shall be ordered to compensate the state for the expenses paid from state funds.

Legal aid can be paid fully or partially by the state and the eligibility is based on the applicant's available means. This is calculated from the combination of monthly income after taxes, expenditure and wealth. Expenses to be taken into account are for example housing costs (no instalment of a mortgage), childcare fees and recovery proceedings. Wealth is calculated after liabilities attached to its value are reduced. The primary residence of the family, an ordinary leisure home and a car are disregarded as assets, provided that their value is reasonable in proportion to the family's size and need.

Legal aid is provided for free to persons without means. Others are liable to co-pay for the legal aid they are given. The costs collected from the applicant include the legal aid charge and the excess. In-come levels for single persons and persons with spouses for fully or partially paid legal aid are as follows:

Income / single person	Excess	Income / spouses, per person	Excess
EUR 600 at the most	0%	EUR 550 at the most	0%
EUR 800 at the most	20%	EUR 700 at the most	20%
EUR 900 at the most	30%	EUR 800 at the most	30%
EUR 1,050 at the most	40%	EUR 1,000 at the most	40%
EUR 1,150 at the most	55%	EUR 1,100 at the most	55%
EUR 1,300 at the most	75%	EUR 1,200 at the most	75%

All who are obligated to pay an excess have to also pay a legal aid charge of EUR 70.

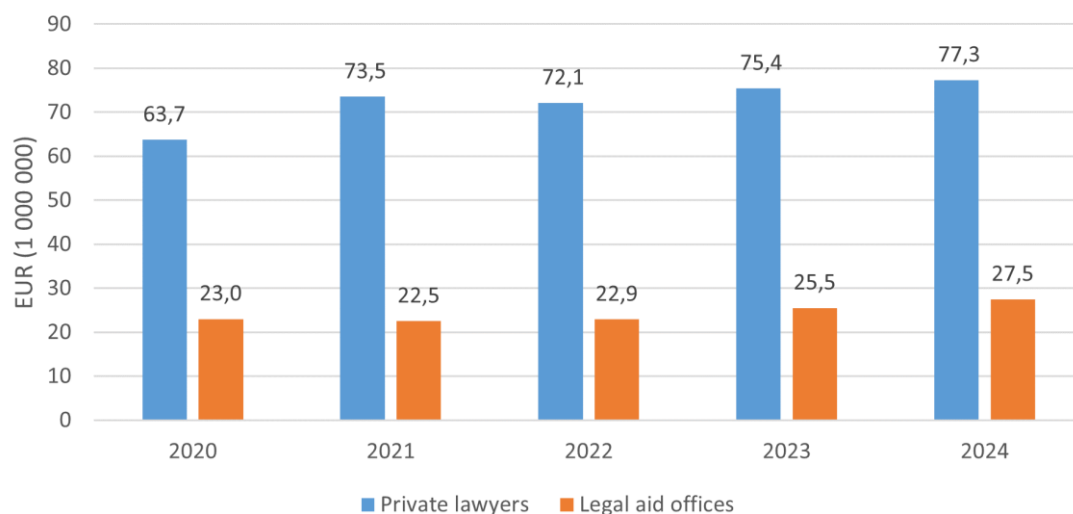
Around 74% of the matters managed by legal aid offices were handled for free (2024).

The legal aid fees are determined in compliance with the Government Decree on Legal Aid Fee Criteria. At the moment, the hourly fee is EUR 120. A minimum fee per case is also possible (EUR 415–715, depending on type of case and the length of court session).

3. Budget and Spend:

The funding for legal aid comes from the Government's Budget via the Ministry of Justice. All public legal aid attorneys, who work at a state legal aid office get a monthly salary paid by the state from the legal aid budget. A private lawyer who deals with a legal aid case will be paid an hourly remuneration case per case. A private lawyer's fee is also paid from the legal aid budget by a decision of a state legal aid office or a court.

Cost of legal aid



4. Scope, Caseload and Eligibility:

Because legal aid is granted on the basis of the applicant's monthly available means (not income), it is hard to say what share of the Finnish population qualifies for legal aid. A person's situation in life has a major role in determining if he or she has a right to legal aid. In 2018 the share of people within the scope of legal aid was 52.6% of people aged 15 years or older.

Public legal aid attorneys working at the public legal aid offices are public officials paid by the state who can handle all type of measures from legal advice to court proceedings. Private lawyers handling legal aid cases are like any other private practitioners of law (bar members or licensed trial counsels). The biggest distinction between the services of the state legal aid offices and those provided by private lawyers is that the private lawyers are only allowed to handle legal aid cases involving court proceedings. This leaves all out-of-court issues (e.g. providing legal advice or document drafting or drawing up of a document, such as an estate inventory or an agreed distribution of matrimonial property) under the jurisdiction of the legal aid offices. In these situations, the recipient of legal aid cannot choose a private lawyer, unless there is a special reason for it. The reason may be that the legal aid office has a conflict of interest in the matter, is too busy to take the client or the matter requires special knowledge that the public legal aid attorneys of the office do not have.

Legal aid is not provided if:

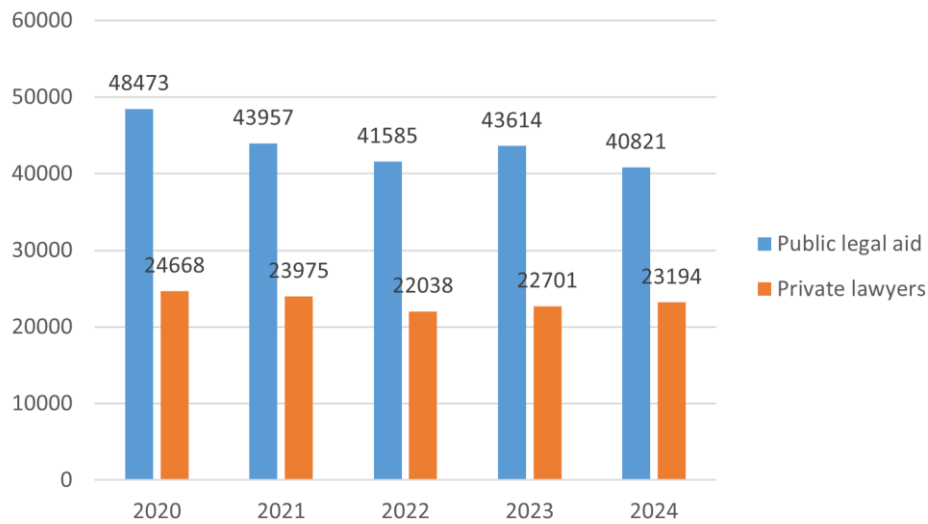
- the matter is of minor importance to the applicant
- it would be manifestly pointless in proportion to the benefit that would ensue to the applicant
- pleading the case would constitute an abuse of process, or
- the matter is based on an assigned right and there is reason to believe that the purpose of the assignment was to receive legal aid.

Legal aid does not cover a lawyer's services:

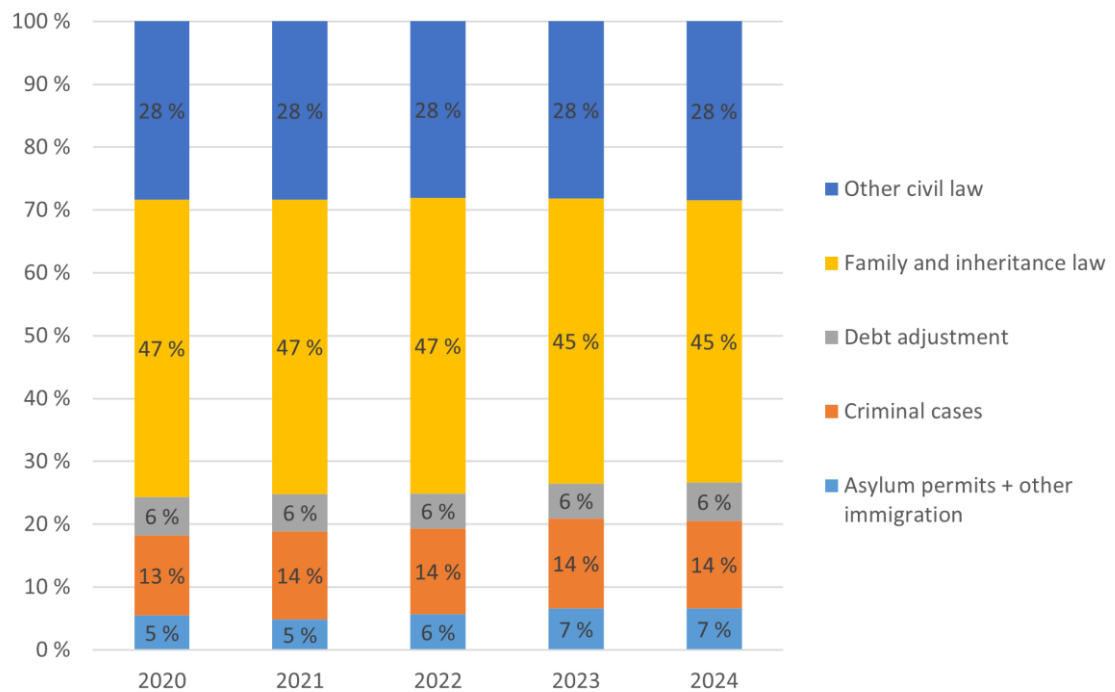
- in a petitionary matter handled in a general court, unless there are especially weighty reasons for it
- in a simple criminal case, where the prevailing penal practice indicates that the foreseeable penalty will not be more severe than a fine or where the access of the defendant to justice does not require a lawyer in view of the foreseeable penalty and the results of the investigation of the matter
- in a matter concerning taxation or a public charge, unless there are especially weighty reasons for it, or
- in a matter where the person's right to request a rectification or to appeal is based on a membership of a municipality or another public corporation.

However, a public legal aid attorney may provide legal advice and draw up any required documents, if necessary.

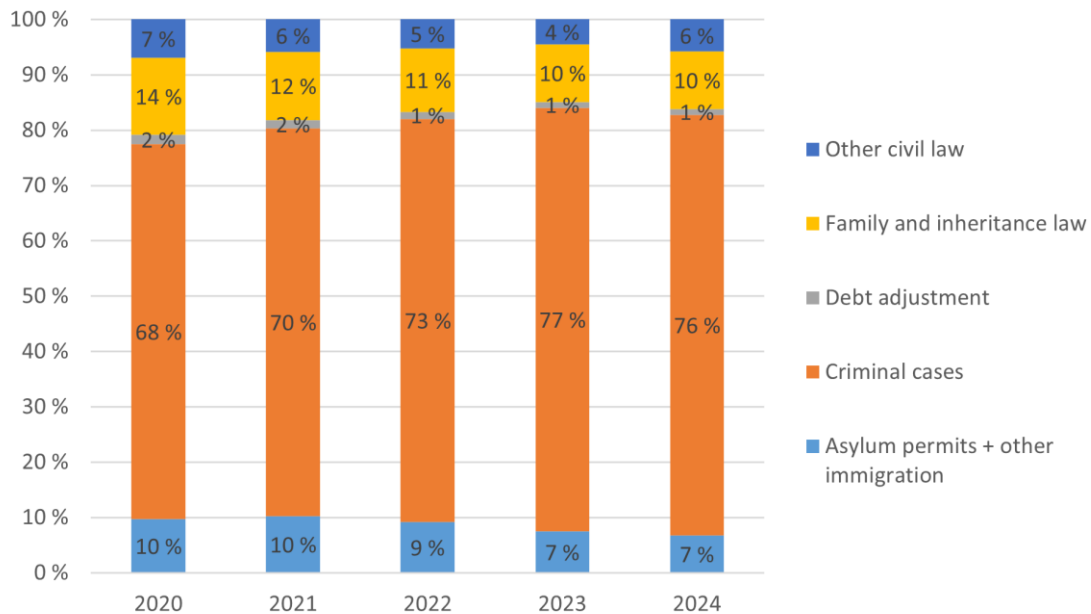
Cases dealt by legal aid offices and by private lawyers



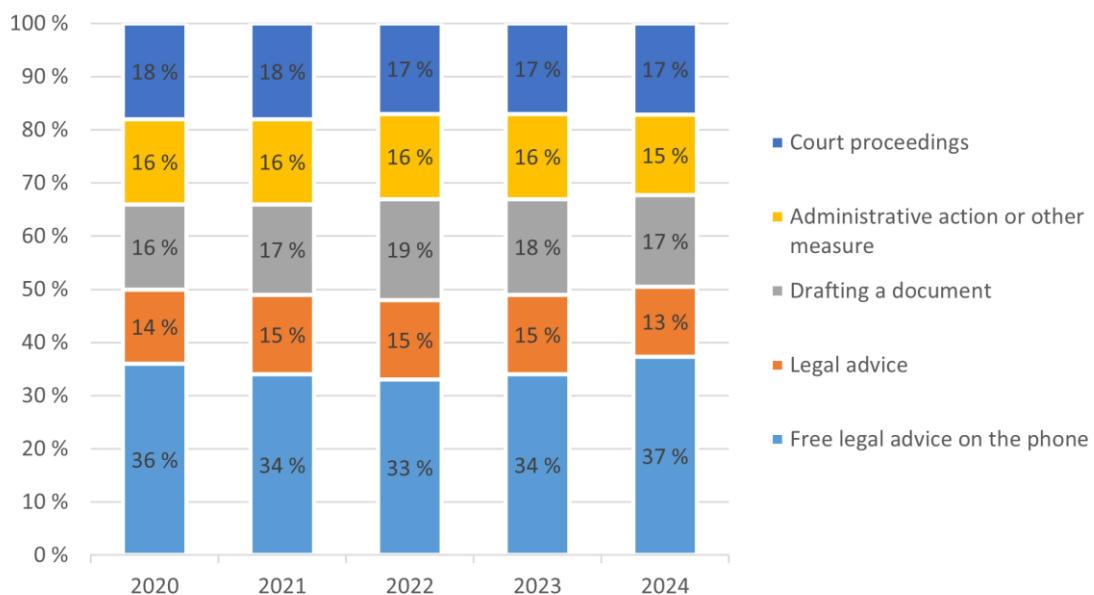
Cases received by legal aid offices



Legal aid cases received by private lawyers



Cases dealt with at legal aid offices



5. Quality Assurance:

Legal aid is provided by public legal aid attorneys and private lawyers. A public legal aid attorney is a lawyer working at a state legal aid office. Private lawyers are attorneys-at-law or other private lawyers. An attorney-at-law is a lawyer who is a member of the Finnish Bar Association and whose activities are supervised by the Bar and the Chancellor of Justice. All other private lawyers who are not attorneys-at-law and who deal with legal aid cases have to be licensed trial counsels. A licensed trial counsel is a lawyer who has been granted a permit by the Board on Trial Counsel to act as an attorney. Where the person receiving legal aid has self-nominated an eligible person

as his or her lawyer, that person shall be appointed unless there are special reasons to the contrary.

The activities of public legal aid attorneys and licensed trial counsels are supervised in the same manner as those of attorneys-at-law. In his or her task, the lawyer shall adhere to proper conduct as attorney. All Finnish attorneys-at-law, public legal aid attorneys and licensed trial counsels must follow the professional and ethical standards of the legal profession.

The requirements for eligibility for the office of public legal aid attorney are a Master of Laws degree obtained in Finland (but not master of international and comparative law) and adequate experience of advocacy or adjudication. Around half of the public legal aid attorneys are members of the Bar.

The license to serve as an attorney and trial counsel is granted to a person who:

- has completed a master's degree in law (other than a master of international and comparative law degree), or a corresponding law degree abroad which has been recognized in Finland as separately provided
- has become sufficiently acquainted with the work of a lawyer and trial counsel
- is honest and is not manifestly unsuitable for the work of a lawyer and trial counsel, and
- is not bankrupt and has full legal capacity.

A lawyer has the sufficient acquaintance with the work if he or she:

- has passed the advocate's examination
- has completed his or her court practice
- has served at least one year as a prosecutor, or
- after having received the degree has served at least one year in other assignments that acquaint him or her with the work of a lawyer and legal counsel.

A person is not deemed honest if within the preceding:

- five years he or she has been sentenced to imprisonment on the basis of a legally final judgment or
- three years he or she has been sentenced to a fine for an offence that demonstrates that he or she is unsuitable for work as a lawyer or legal counsel.

A person who, as a disciplinary sanction, has been struck from the membership of the national general association of attorneys or struck from the EU register kept by the Bar may not be granted the license until three years have elapsed from when he or she had been struck from membership or the register. A person whose license to serve as lawyer or legal counsel has been revoked as a disciplinary sanction may not be granted a new license until three years have elapsed from the beginning of the period the license was revoked.

In addition to exclusion from the proceedings, there is also a specific procedure in place to be applied in the supervision and direction of the lawyers. The courts monitor the appropriateness of the procedure also by way of active process management. As the fees of the public legal aid attorneys are paid from state funds, it is particularly justified to evaluate the quality of their work. It is possible, by virtue of the effective legis-

lation, to reduce the lawyer's fee or even to leave it altogether undetermined, if the quality of the work has not met the set requirements. The courts shall actively and justifiably use this opportunity to make sure that the lawyers' work is of high quality.

A research project was initiated in June 2020 to examine the access to legal aid. **Report of the impact of income limits for public legal aid** was published in October 2021. The project provided information on the impact of income limits for public legal aid. The main result of the study was that not all people with low incomes receive legal aid free of charge at the current income limits. In addition, according to the interviews related to the report, there were also some problems concerning people with middle income. It is proposed in the report that the income limits of legal aid should be raised and the calculation method of financial criteria should be simplified.

The current Government Programme aims to improve access to legal aid. The objective is to adjust the income limits for legal aid. The aim would be to raise the income thresholds for legal aid and simplify the eligibility criteria, to allow more people on low and medium incomes to access legal aid. This would also make it easier to apply for legal aid.

The low income thresholds set for legal aid have meant that not all people with low income can receive legal aid free of charge, and none of the people with medium income will receive legal aid even with a deductible. The share of people within the scope of legal aid has decreased from 2016 to 2018. In 2016, its scope included 55.9% and two years later 52.3% of people aged 15 years or older. By raising the income thresholds set for legal aid, people with low and medium income would have a better opportunity to receive legal aid.

If the opportunities of people with low and medium income to receive legal aid were to be improved by raising the income thresholds, the costs incurred by the state would increase by a total of EUR 10.7 million per year, of which the share of costs of the Legal Aid Offices would be 30% and the share of fees of attorneys would be 70%.

The Government Report on the Administration of Justice was published in November 2022. The report was prepared under the management of the Ministry of Justice. The report provides a comprehensive and concise overview of the current state of the administration of justice in Finland and its operating conditions and development trends. The field of administration of justice is broad. This Report focuses on the activities of the court system, the National Prosecution Authority, the National Enforcement Authority, the Prison and Probation Service, the public legal aid and guardianship districts, the Legal Register Centre, the Consumer Disputes Board and the Non-Discrimination and Equality Board.

International comparisons show that the rule of law has a solid foundation in Finland. However, the insufficiency of budget appropriations allocated for the administration of justice and the operating conditions of actors in the field have given rise to significant concerns already for a longer time and, despite significant increases in appropriations during the current parliamentary term, the situation remains unsatisfactory. Key problems regarding legal protection include the excessive length of legal proceedings and the high cost of trials. At the same time, the personnel are overburdened.

The Government Report sets medium-term objectives for achieving reasonable quality in the administration of justice. It also presents proposals for measures to ensure sufficient resources for the administration of justice, to improve the internal structures and processes, and to improve the availability of legal services and customer service. Securing appropriate operating conditions for the administration of justice and achieving the objectives set for the administration of justice require a total of approximately EUR 90 million in permanent annual additional funding.

The hourly fees for attorneys providing legal aid

The hourly fees for attorneys providing legal aid were increased from EUR 110 to EUR 120 in the beginning of 2025. Prior to this the level of compensation had been increased in 2014. Due to the economic situation the increase is less than inflation has been.

6. Public Legal Education:

In the assessment of the coverage of legal aid, attention must be paid to the geographical coverage as well as to the coverage in respect of different groups of parties and matters. The case law of the European Court of Human Rights concerning a person's right to public legal aid during a criminal investigation must be taken into account in this assessment. The same applies to the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union concerning a legal entity's right to legal aid. Furthermore, the grounds for receiving legal aid in different administrative judicial matters, including tax matters, must be assessed.

Basically, legal aid can be applied by completing an online legal aid application form or an application can be submitted directly to the legal aid office. In most cases, the applicant's first contact is the lawyer of his or her choice, who then draws up the application for legal aid.

It has been possible to apply for legal aid online since 2010. The case management system for legal aid cases, Romeo, is a national information system used by legal aid offices and courts. The introduction of e-services at legal aid offices has brought significant changes to the procedure for applying for legal aid and the related practices. Thanks to the online legal aid application, it is possible to centralize the processing of legal aid decisions to certain legal aid offices.

Legal counselling has been developed into a more customer-oriented service that is easier to use. Legal advice may be requested at a legal aid office anonymously through an electronic chat service.

A new legal aid e-service for individual clients called MyLegalAid has also been introduced. An appointment or a request for telephone counselling with a legal aid office may be done online. Clients can also communicate online with the Legal Aid Office about their pending cases.

Remote services will be used more extensively especially in situations where a legal aid office is disqualified from handling a case and where the realization of the linguistic rights of a client so require. If a legal aid office cannot provide a service, the client

may be provided legal aid as a remote service from another legal aid office. Moreover, the staff of a legal aid office may be contacted through a remote connection from a home computer or a joint service point or through a mobile device.

All citizens shall have easy access to legal counselling services through various channels. These channels include different forms of online counselling, electronic services, remote services, a telephone service and personal consultations. The objective regarding online legal counselling is that citizens have easy and fast access to information in accordance with their respective life situations. Citizens may flexibly transfer from general information sources to a more individual approach and electronic services, and also to consultation over the telephone or personal meetings. The information should also be written in clear language. The Accessibility Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council also brought its own requirements for services in different channels. Accessibility means that websites and mobile applications and their contents are such that anyone can use them and understand the content.

The Oikeus.fi website has just been renewed and it contains information about the Finnish judicial system and links to the websites of the independent courts, the National Legal Services Authority, the National Prosecution Authority, the National Enforcement Authority Finland, and the Criminal Sanctions Agency. This website also contains links to the websites of other authorities in the administrative branch of the Ministry of Justice. The website of the National Legal Services Authority has information available online to the general public on legal aid in both of the national languages (Finnish and Swedish) and also in English.

Authorities, companies and organisations provide a multitude of different free and commercial legal counselling services. Counselling services are mainly one-way information channels that provide general information. From a citizen's perspective, the challenge is finding the right service and assessing its quality and reliability. The focus of the service should be shifted to a more individual level and it should be made easier for the client to transfer between different services. However, general advice in everyday legal problems is fragmentary and spread out across a number of different pages.

7. Alternative Sources of Legal Aid services:

The primary means for covering legal costs for individuals is the legal expenses insurance (LEI). Usually LEI is an automatic add-on product of household insurance, which is why around 90 % of Finns are covered by it. According to the insurance companies, it is very rare that a client would ask for the LEI to be removed from his or her household insurance. In addition, all companies do not allow the removing of LEI from the household insurance policies. The annual costs of LEI vary between EUR 15 and EUR 100 depending on the insurance company and its policy.

LEI does, however, incorporate many restrictions, which makes it suitable only for certain types of legal issues. First of all, to use LEI the person must prove that he or she has a legal dispute that can be resolved in court. In other words, out-of-court proceedings (e.g. legal advice, document drafting) are excluded from LEI policies. Also, family and inheritance issues are generally excluded, or they have to meet some strictly defined criteria. Cases between an employer and an employee are also excluded from

LEI policies. On the other hand, a majority of workers in Finland are union members and union fees usually cover legal assistance in employment disputes. In criminal matters, LEI offers no coverage if there is a state prosecutor demanding a sentence. In these cases, the state pays the public defender representing the defendant. Depending on the insurance company and its policy, LEI can offer some coverage if the case is settled before the main hearing, but in such cases only 50% of all expenses are usually paid. As a rule, LEI does not cover the legal costs of the opposite party.

The usual maximum cover for legal costs under normal LEI policy conditions is around EUR 8,500, with an excess of 15% to 25% or a minimum of EUR 150–340. The criticism against the current maximum coverage is that it is sufficient only in the simplest disputes, whereas in the case of a more complicated issue, such as housing dispute, legal costs are usually much higher than EUR 10,000. Usually LEI policies are fairly similar between insurance companies, with no major differences in the terms. Basically there is just one model for everyone. However, some insurance companies have options for higher maximum coverage than the usual EUR 8,500, but these are not widely used or even marketed by the companies. The higher sum is around EUR 20,000.

State funded legal aid is secondary to the LEI. If person has LEI that covers the matter at hand legal aid will not be granted. A few exceptions still apply. A person may be entitled to state funded legal aid for costs that exceed the maximum coverage provided by LEI (of course subject to all the other conditions for state funded legal aid being met). In some cases legal aid can also be granted in order to pay the excess of a LEI policy.

In an on-call service organised by the Finnish Bar Association in several localities across Finland, attorneys-at-law provide free of charge counselling in all legal matters. The attorney-at-law shall state whether it is necessary to seek legal expert assistance in the matter and, if necessary, refer the matter to a lawyer or the appropriate authority. No documents are produced at the meetings nor are any kind of assignments handled. Discussions are always confidential.

8. Holistic legal services:

The National Legal Services Authority is also responsible for organising the guardianship services. A guardian appointed under a lasting power of attorney may be necessary when a person's mental capacity has degraded due to a serious illness or old age to the extent that he or she is no longer capable of protecting his or her interests or taking care of his or her personal affairs. The local register office or the court may appoint a public guardian to act as the guardian. The public guardian is usually a public official employed by a public guardianship office. In some regions, a public guardian employed by a provider of outsourced services may act as a public guardian. A private person such as a close relative or another close person may also act as a guardian. The local register office provides advice and guidance in the procedure for appointing a guardian. All public guardians are supervised by Digital and Population Data Services Agency.

As of 1 January 2019, the state legal aid offices have provided financial and debt counselling services. A person may turn to any legal aid office irrespective of his or

her municipality of residence. It is also possible to receive counselling services as a remote service. The services are provided free of charge. Financial and debt counsellors can assist in reviewing the person's overall financial situation, planning finances and drawing up debt settlement proposals for creditors. A counsellor may also be present at settlement negotiations conducted with creditors. Financial and debt counselling services provide assistance in applying for debt adjustment at the district court and in drawing up a payment schedule and other necessary reports and documents.

The Finnish system for alternative dispute resolution, i.e. proceedings before a matter is considered by a court, is a well-established one and consists of boards and tribunals where citizens have a chance to have their matter considered free of charge and without court proceedings. Society already offers many different mediation systems, but the related mechanisms are not used to their full potential in early dispute resolution. The long-term objective is that a mediation process in family matters should be more customer-oriented and the process should be developed across administrative boundaries in collaboration between the social welfare services and the judicial administration.

A project of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has examined the possibilities to transfer the responsibility for mediation to the administrative branch of the Ministry of Justice. The steering group of the project has proposed that mediation in criminal and civil matters be transferred from the administrative branch of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to that of the Ministry of Justice so that these matters would be dealt with by the same authority as legal aid and public guardianship. The matter is being prepared and no decision has yet been made.

The consumer dispute process requires further development in order to make the process more effective and to streamline it in accordance with the needs of the client. Here the collaboration should include the Consumer Disputes Board (CDB) and other consumer authorities. Clients of the CDB are provided with access to electronic services that contain advisory services. Efficiency is also increased with an electronic case management system. Consumers may request a recommended decision from the Consumer Disputes Board online.

9. UN SDG Standard 16.3

In order to shorten the total length of judicial proceedings and to guarantee the quality of legal protection, a programme for the reform of the administration of justice (the legal protection programme) has been drawn up by the Ministry of Justice for 2013–2025. The legal protection programme was drawn up by a broad-based advisory board. In addition to representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the advisory board consisted of representatives of the different court instances, the prosecutors, the enforcement service, The Finnish Bar Association, and the National Audit Office of Finland. The legal protection programme drawn up by the advisory board contains a wide range of proposals for the future development of the courts, prosecutors, enforcement and legal aid.

Under the legal protection programme, the quality of advocacy and legal aid will be improved by making supervision more effective. More effective supervision improves legal protection while also making the consideration of matters in courts more effective.

tive. In addition, the coverage, allocation and costs of legal aid will be examined and adjusted to correspond to the actual legal protection needs. The use of e-services and remote services will be made more extensive.

The objective for the development of legal counselling services is to make them more customer-oriented and to provide legal advice in a more diverse manner. Many of these development projects have already started before, but the development work will continue:

- The plan is to evaluate the clarity and level of customer orientation in the general legal advice provided on the websites suomi.fi, oikeus.fi and oikeusministerio.fi, and to determine whether it is necessary to increase the clarity by gathering the information under a single service.
- Online legal aid services will be taken into wider use and their usability will be improved. The need for a structured and individual online service (e.g. rechtwijzer.nl) will be assessed in collaboration with the social welfare authorities. The need for creating online application forms (e.g. for a will, a power of attorney, an agreement on division of property) will be assessed.
- Legal aid offices will be increasing their collaboration with local authorities in order to provide clients with smoother legal aid and mediation services.
- Legal aid offices participate in the pilot testing of the ASPA project and, should the trial be successful, other legal aid offices may agree with the municipalities to start providing legal advice at municipal service points.
- The goals for the next few years include digitalisation of legal aid services and extension of the use of remote services, including the use of videoconferencing at trials.

10. Other

Most innovative project 2023-2024

The establishment of the National Legal Services Authority was a welcomed and awaited reform. The Authority started operating at the beginning of 2025 and it is responsible for services in legal aid, public guardianship and financial and debt counselling. The current Government Programme aims to improve access to legal services and the establishment of the National Legal Services Authority will serve this goal. The national Legal Services Authority allows to provide more consistent and high-quality legal aid, public guardianship and financial and debt counselling services.

The National Legal Services Authority consist of central administration and legal aid and public guardianship offices. Services are provided by 22 legal aid offices and 22 guardianship offices in mainland Finland and by the Legal Aid and Guardianship Office in Åland. The central administration of the National Legal Services Authority provides centralized support and administrative services for the offices and develops the authority's activities. The Ministry of Justice continues to take care of the government-level tasks that fall under it, such as the budgetary procedure of the administrative branch, strategic guidelines and the drafting of legislation.

The establishment of the authority is considered to allow for a more efficient and coherent development and better resourcing of activities than at present. Authority ensures that legal aid services are accessible to all.

A renewed online service has become available for legal aid clients. Legal aid may be requested online on MyLegalAid service. Preliminary calculation of your eligibility for legal aid can also be made online. The service also allows clients to communicate with a legal aid office about a pending case. An appointment or a request for telephone counselling with a legal aid office may be done online. On MyLegalAid clients may browse their own applications and decisions and monitor the progress of their cases.

Most disappointing trend 2023-2024 and biggest challenge for 2025

In recent years, it has been observed that the number of applicants for vacant posts in legal aid offices has decreased. Recruitment is particularly challenging in Swedish-speaking areas.

The Report of the impact of income limits shows that there is a need for increases. Increasing the hourly fees of attorneys that provide legal aid and raising the income thresholds set for legal aid, is very challenging in the current economic situation.

Since the mentioned report, the government has increased the hourly fee for attorneys providing legal aid from EUR 110 to EUR 120. Due to the economic situation the increase is less than inflation has been.

It would be important to raise the income thresholds for legal aid to better reflect the current income level of the population. Raising the income thresholds for legal aid and simplifying the eligibility criteria would allow more people to qualify for legal aid and make the application process easier.

The current income thresholds set for legal aid have meant that not all people with low income can receive legal aid free of charge, and none of the people with medium income will receive legal aid even with a deductible. The share of people within the scope of legal aid has decreased from 2016 to 2018. In 2016, its scope included 55.9% and two years later 52.3% of people aged 15 years or older. By raising the income thresholds set for legal aid, people with low and medium income would have a better opportunity to receive legal aid.

The current economic situation makes it challenging to raise income thresholds. If the opportunities of people with low and medium income to receive legal aid were to be improved by raising the income thresholds, the costs incurred by the state would increase by a total of EUR 10.7 million per year, of which the share of costs of the Legal Aid Offices would be 30% and the share of fees of attorneys would be 70%.

Which types of new legal aid services have been introduced and which have disappeared in the last two years?

A project of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has examined the possibilities to transfer the responsibility for mediation to the administra-

tive branch of the Ministry of Justice. The steering group of the project has proposed that mediation in criminal and civil matters be transferred from the administrative branch of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to that of the Ministry of Justice so that these matters would be dealt with by the same authority as legal aid and public guardianship. The matter is being prepared and no decision has yet been made.

The number of mediations has increased in recent years and mediation has become an important part of the criminal policy system. Mediation saves resources in the criminal procedure. The aim of the change is to reinforce the use of mediation and therefore reduce pressure on the justice system. Increasing the use of mediation would reduce the number of court cases. The general goal of mediation is to prevent recidivism. The transfer would create the conditions for the development of mediation nationwide.