

# National Report The Netherlands

ILAG Conference 2025

Cologne



# Colophon

Kenniscentrum Stelsel Gesubsidieerde Rechtsbijstand

Knowledge Centre Legal Aid System Netherlands

**Titel** National Report The Netherlands

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**Date** May 2025

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# 1 Country details

*Name, Population, GDP, Poverty line/ % of population deemed to be living in poverty, number of practising lawyers in the jurisdiction.*

**Name:** The Netherlands

**Population:** 17.810.000 inhabitants (2023)<sup>1</sup>

**GDP:** \$1.15 trillion<sup>2</sup>, \$64.572.0 per capita<sup>3</sup> (2023)

**Poverty line:** 3,1% of people in the Netherlands live below the poverty line in 2023. 1,8% of working people live below the poverty line in 2023. 3,6% of underaged children live below the poverty line in 2023<sup>4</sup>.

**Number of practising lawyers<sup>5</sup> in the jurisdiction:** 18.513 (1<sup>st</sup> January 2024)<sup>6</sup>

**Number of practising lawyers in legal aid:** 5934 (2024)<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/visualisaties/dashboard-bevolking/bevolkingsteller>

<sup>2</sup> [GDP \(current US\\$\) - Netherlands | Data](#)

<sup>3</sup> [GDP per capita \(current US\\$\) - Netherlands | Data](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Armoede en schulden | CBS](#)

<sup>5</sup> In The Netherlands, the term "lawyers" can refer to both people studying law, people with a law degree as well as registered lawyers. In this report, we use the term to refer to the latter.

<sup>6</sup> [Groeï van de balie zet door | Nederlandse orde van advocaten](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Advocaten en mediators - Jaarverslag 2024](#)



## 2 Legal Aid Organisation/Authority

*Name and Status of LAO (Independent, within Government, part of the Bar Association/ Law Society, Public Defenders Office etc). Number of board and staff members? Delivery method (salaried, private profession, paralegals, through NGOs etc) Number of lawyers, advocates and paralegals (separately) participating in the legal aid programme? If mixed please give the division of labour and balance of the mix.*

The Ministry of Justice & Security (J&S) is responsible for the legal aid system. The Dutch legal aid system follows a threefold model. It encompasses three 'tiers' providing legal aid. The legal aid system is a mixed model, consisting of a public preliminary provision, public first-tier, and private second-tier help.

An independent governing body called the Legal Aid Board ('Raad voor Rechtsbijstand', hereinafter: LAB) is entrusted with matters concerning administration, supervision and expenditure with regards to the second tier. This includes matching the availability of legal aid providers with the demand for legal aid, as well as the supervision and quality control of the actual services provided. The LAB is financed by the Ministry of J&S and accounts to this Ministry for its budgetary allocations. Second tier legal aid operates according to an open-end provision.

This report is drafted from the perspective of the LAB.

### 1. Public preliminary provision

The Legal Services Counters (see below) have a website with elaborate legal information and self-help tools. Online self-help, information and support is offered on the Rechtwijzer website (Rechtwijzer translates into Roadmap to Justice; see [www.rechtwijzer.nl](http://www.rechtwijzer.nl)) In 2024, Rechtwijzer started to develop various diagnosis tools that can directly forward people who need a lawyer to the LAB. The LAB then matches these people with a suitable lawyer.

### 2. Public first-tier

The Legal Services Counters (LSC) function as what is commonly known as the 'front office' (primary help). The LSC provides information and basic advice and can refer to a private lawyer or mediator (secondary tier of legal aid). The route via the LSC is not mandatory for people. If necessary, clients can also be referred to other professionals or support agencies.

### 3. Private second-tier

Private lawyers and mediators provide legal aid in more complicated or time-consuming matters (secondary help) in the form of certificates. A lawyer (or mediator) submits an application to the LAB on behalf of his client. If legal aid is granted, a certificate is issued. Lawyers and mediators



receive compensation from the LAB. Generally, they receive a fixed fee according to the type of case (with fixed surcharges if applicable). Under certain conditions, additional compensation can be granted.

#### *Number of board and staff members*

The LAB has one board member and more than 300 staff members.<sup>8</sup>

#### *Number of lawyers, advocates, and paralegals (separately) participating in the legal aid programme*

In 2024 5.934 lawyers and 702 mediators were active in subsidised legal aid.<sup>9</sup> Paralegals working for registered lawyers are allowed, under conditions set by the LAB and the Bar Association, to perform work that is covered by the legal aid subsidy in cases of a legal aid lawyer. They cannot participate directly themselves in the legal aid programme.

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<sup>8</sup> [Organisatiestructuur - raadvoorrechtsbijstand.org](https://www.raadvoorrechtsbijstand.org)

<sup>9</sup> [Advocaten en mediators - Jaarverslag 2024](#)



### 3 Paying providers of legal aid advice and services

*What payment methods are used to recompense private lawyers or other providers in your system (e.g. contract, fixed fee, hourly rate, part pro bono, etc)? If your jurisdiction uses salaried lawyers or advice providers does the contract of employment have any requirements as to quantity of work / cases required per month or year, or other targets to be met?*

#### *Payment of lawyers and mediators*

When a case is closed, the lawyer can invoice the LAB for the services provided. The fixed fee varies across different types of cases, with fixed surcharges for some categories. Fees are based on extensive analyses of legal aid cases from the past and correspond with the average time spent on a specific type of case. In a small number of cases, the lawyer cannot reasonably be expected to manage a very complex case within the time limit of the fixed fee. In that case, permission may be sought to spend more hours on the case. Under certain conditions, more hours may be granted. If the conditions are met, the number of billable hours in excess of the fixed fee will be granted, up to a maximum of 50 hours. The client must pay an extra personal contribution when additional hours are granted. This contribution is imposed once and is independent of the number of hours granted.<sup>10</sup> In 2017, an extensive re-evaluation of the average time spent per case was conducted<sup>11</sup> and as a result of this, fees for most cases were re-evaluated and increased in 2022. In family cases, new fixed surcharges were introduced, for example in divorce cases involving minors/children. In 2024 another re-evaluation of the average time spent per case was conducted. The report of this re-evaluation was presented in March 2025. One of the recommendations of this report is the introduction of an office surcharge that provides for the additional costs of working in an office. This surcharge should ensure the attraction and retention of trainee lawyers. The extra budget needed after re-evaluation of the time spent is available per 2027. Although necessary for a future-proof and sustainable system, no budget has been allocated yet for the office surcharge. More on this advice can be read at point 11 of this report.

A few examples of the fixed fees are presented below. In cases that concern labour (dismissal), for example, lawyers receive a compensation that corresponds to 19 hours.

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<sup>10</sup> [Eerste aanvraag extra uren - rvr.org](https://www.rvr.org)

<sup>11</sup> [Andere tijden - evaluatie puntentoekenning in het stelsel van gesubsidieerde rechtsbijstand - raadvoorrechtsbijstand.org](https://www.raadvoorrechtsbijstand.org)



*Table 2: Examples of types of cases and the corresponding fixed number of paid working hours<sup>12</sup>*

Type of case	Fixed number of paid working hours
Labour: dismissal	19
Divorce	13
Felony	7
Minor criminal offence	6

In 1994, the hourly rate for legal aid was €26. In 2000 and 2002, fees increased substantially. Since then, the Ministry determines the hourly rate every year following an annual price index. In 2024, the hourly rate is €126.55.<sup>13</sup> This means for example that for a labour - dismissal case a lawyer receives 19 x €126.55. A small part of this fixed fee is paid by the client through the individual contribution; lawyers are responsible for collecting this contribution themselves. The LAB pays the remainder. More information about the personal contribution can be found in the chapter below.

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<sup>12</sup> [Punten- en zaakcodelijst voor toevoeg- en vaststelregistratie - rvr.org](https://www.rvr.org/punten-en-zaakcodelijst-voor-toevoeg-en-vaststelregistratie)

<sup>13</sup> [Indexering van de vergoeding - rvr.org](https://www.rvr.org/indexering-van-de-vergoeding)





## 4 Budget and Spend:

*Please give the budget for Publicly Funded Legal Services / Legal Aid in your jurisdiction for the last two years. If possible, show the actual expenditure broken down by civil, criminal, administrative, children, asylum? Expenditure on initial advice services. Please indicate the proportion of the legal aid budget that is funded by (a) central / Federal Government (b) Local or state government. Contribution paid by the client. Is your legal aid budget demand led (uncapped) or capped or a mixture? (Please elaborate).*

Financed by the Ministry of J&S, the LAB is accountable to this Ministry for its budgetary allocations. The legal aid system operates according to an open-end provision. In 2024 the total expenditure on legal aid was €585.100.000.

Expenditures can be broken down into the following domains (2024):

- Civil: € 184.400.000
- Administrative (including immigration): € 137.000.000
- Criminal (including duty solicitors): € 228.400.000
- Remaining expenditures: €35.300.000

### *Personal contribution clients*

The costs for legal aid are for the largest part covered by the subsidy and only for a very small part through an income-related contribution of individual clients. The personal contribution is intended as an incentive. It is designed to encourage clients to carefully weigh the pros and cons of engaging a lawyer and to discourage the submission of trivial or insignificant matters to the legal system.

The personal contribution is determined based on clients' income in the reference year (t-2). For granting a certificate in 2024, the income of 2022 is therefore leading. If clients earn less than €22.100 (single household) or €30.700 (shared household/single person with children), their personal contribution is €226, which is the lowest personal contribution. The higher the income, the higher the personal contribution. The highest possible personal contribution is €952. If one's income is higher than €31.100 (single household) or €44.000 (shared household/single person with children), a person is no longer eligible for a legal aid certificate. Currently, lawyers are responsible for collecting this personal contribution themselves. However, in the future the LAB will be responsible for collecting this personal contribution.



There are five contribution categories, dependent on the client's income. In approximately 87% of the certificates granted, the person seeking justice falls under the lowest individual contribution category.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> [Gebruik tweedelijnsrechtsbijstand \(advocatuur en mediation\) - Jaarverslag 2024](#)



## 5 Scope, Caseload and Eligibility

*What restrictions on scope are there for civil and criminal administrative, children, asylum? legal aid and for initial advice in your jurisdiction? Total number of applications and grants for the last two years. Please break down by civil, criminal administrative, children, asylum? and initial advice as well as by year. Proportion of the population eligible for civil legal aid and/ or initial Advice. Eligibility limits for criminal legal aid. Are means tested contributions part of your (a) civil (b) criminal (c) initial advice eligibility requirements? In your jurisdiction, are legal aided litigants who lose their case liable to pay the other side's legal expenses/ costs?*

### *Scope second line/certificate users*

The LAB assesses the scope of the Legal Aid System and gains an insight into the socio-economic characteristics of those who apply for legal aid. In 2023, approximately 34,4% of the population was eligible for legal aid. Figures for 2024 are not yet available.

On the basis of data it receives from the Central Bureau of Statistics, the LAB can identify the background characteristics of certificate users. Male users of legal aid certificates are overrepresented, as well as certificate users between 25 and 45 years of age; certificate users over 65 are fairly infrequent. Employed and retired workers are found to be fairly underrepresented, whereas recipients of social benefits and other non-working persons are overrepresented. Certificate users are also found to be divorced more often, and are less often married. Certificate users living in single-parent families are overrepresented. Furthermore, certificate users often live in larger cities (>250.000 population) and less often in smaller municipalities (<50.000 population).

### *Process of certificate application*

The LAB assesses applications for a certificate based on the client's income, the client's assets, and the (financial) significance of their legal problem. The LAB verifies the client's personal data with those in the municipal population register and checks the applicant's income and assets with the tax authorities. It is able to do so with the aid of a 'burgerservicenummer' (social security number, BSN); this is a unique identification number, which every Dutch citizen receives when registering in the municipal population register. Status holders and asylum seekers who have been in the Netherlands for more than six months should register in the Basic Registration of Persons (BRP) as soon as possible. They will then receive their social security number.<sup>15</sup> The API with the tax authorities allows the LAB to rapidly obtain information concerning the applicant's income and assets.

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<sup>15</sup> COA - Basisregistratie personen | [www.coa.nl](http://www.coa.nl)



### *Eligibility*

Assessment of the applicant's income and assets is based on the financial situation two years prior to the application date, 'reference year' (t-2). This is the most recent data that is validated and complete. For example, if someone applies for a certificate in 2025, their income in 2023 is taken into account. The applicant's assets may not exceed €31.747 (single household) or €44.000 (shared household/single person with children).<sup>16</sup>

Change of the reference year can be requested if the applicant's income and/or assets have substantially decreased since the reference year. If an applicant wants to apply for a lower personal contribution, their income must have been decreased by at least 15% compared to the reference year.

A certificate can be withdrawn retrospectively if the proceeds of the case equal or exceed the result limit. When a client receives more than €18,476 (per person in 2024<sup>17</sup>) because of the result of a procedure, the client is deemed to pay his own lawyer. In 2025, the result limit is €18,697.<sup>18</sup>

People who do not have the Dutch nationality may be eligible to receive legal aid when they have a problem that concerns the Dutch legal system. The same eligibility rules apply.

Sometimes, clients are exempted from personal contributions, for example for all cases in which people have been deprived of their freedom against their will. And, for example, people who participate in the debt restructuring scheme, are also exempted from paying an individual contribution as well as victims of violent crimes and sexual offenses.

In civil cases, clients who lose their case can be ordered to pay the other side's legal expenses/costs. In criminal cases, convicts (when irrevocably convicted) are obliged to retroactively pay back their legal aid if they turn out not to be eligible.

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<sup>16</sup> [Inkomensnormen en eigen bijdragen - rvr.org](https://www.rvr.org/inkomensnormen-en-eigen-bijdragen)

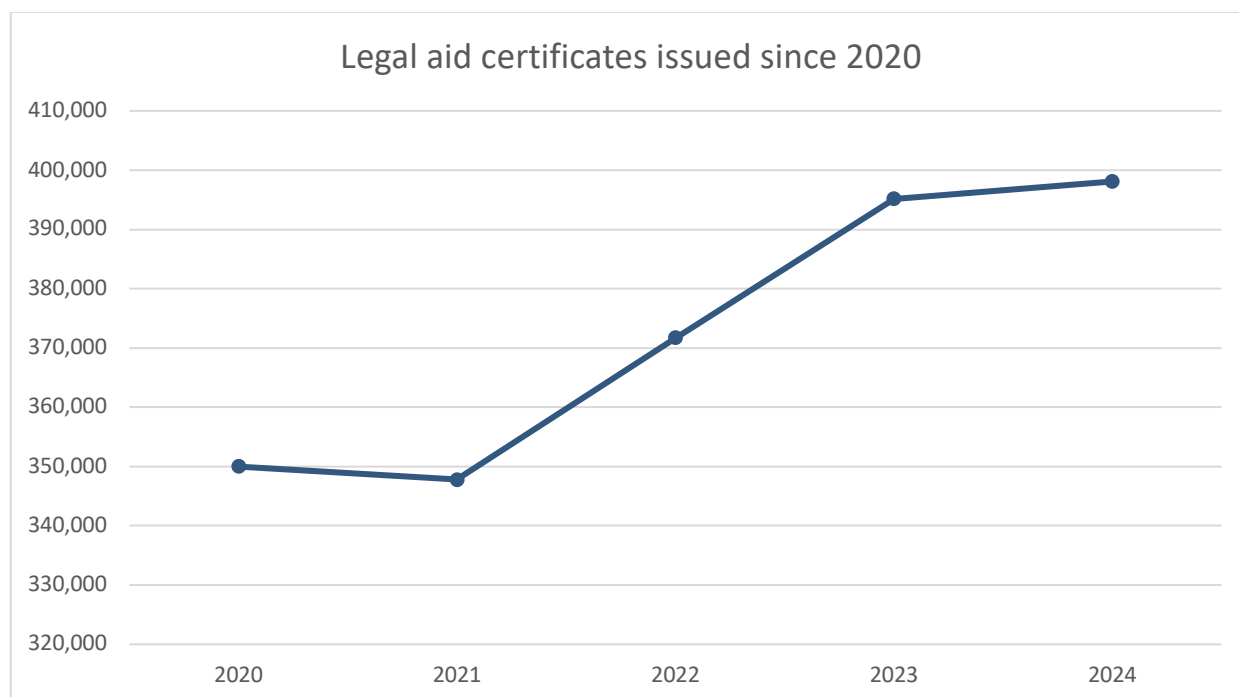
<sup>17</sup> [Inkomensnormen en eigen bijdragen - rvr.org](https://www.rvr.org/inkomensnormen-en-eigen-bijdragen)

<sup>18</sup> [Wanneer moet u de mediator- of advocaatkosten alsnog zelf betalen? - Rechtsbijstand](#)



### *Certificates: facts and figures*

In 2024, 398.090 legal aid certificates were issued. The figure below shows the number of legal aid certificates issued since 2020<sup>19</sup>:



In addition to the regular legal aid certificates – 370.522 in 2024 – 13.002 ‘minor aid’ certificates were issued (i.e. for max. three-hour legal aid). In addition, as of 1 July 2021 this also includes certificates that the LAB temporarily provides to lawyers for a special Advisory certificate self-efficacy (Atz). Further, 14.566 mediation certificates were issued.

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<sup>19</sup> [Jaarverslagen en jaarplannen - raadvoorrechtsbijstand.org](https://jaarverslagen-en-jaarplannen-raadvoorrechtsbijstand.org)



For every certificate issued, the LAB registers the pertaining field of law (see table below). This table shows that approximately half of the certificates concern criminal (34%) and family-related cases (18%).

*Table 4: Types of cases represented in legal aid certificates (2024)*

	<b>Number 2024*</b>	<b>Percentage 2024*</b>
Criminal	125.500	34
Family	68.500	18
Asylum	40.500	11
Psychiatric Hospitals (Compulsory Admissions) Act	34.000	9
Housing**	23.500	6
Contract/consumer	21.000	6
Immigration	14.000	4
Labour/employment	10.000	3
Social benefits	8500	2
Pre-deportation detention	8000	2
Social (security) insurance	7000	2
Administrative	6500	2
Other civil cases	2500	1
Debt restructuring	1500	<1
Other	30	<1
<i>Total regular legal aid certificates</i>	<i>370.522</i>	
Mediation certificates	14.500	
Minor aid certificates	13.000	
<i>Total</i>	<i>398.500</i>	

*\*All figures have been rounded off (to the nearest 500). That is why the total not exactly equals the sum of the separate figures.*

*\*\*This also includes certificates regarding the childcare benefits scandal.*



## 6 Quality Assurance

*System used – Complaints to LAO, Complaints to the Bar Association/ Law Society, Client Satisfaction questionnaires / interviews, Continuing Legal Education, Mentoring, Peer Review, Supervisor audit, Observation, or video/audio tape etc? What requirements are there (if any) for lawyers and others who wish to provide legal aid, other than membership of the Bar / professional association e.g. registration, experience, special exams, interviews, upper or lower limits on number of cases undertaken annually etc?*

The number of certificates that can be granted to one lawyer or mediator is maximised to 250 units per year. Each certificate is weighed according to the fixed number of paid working hours for each certificate. A maximum number is maintained for reasons of quality. If the number of certificates exceeds 250, lawyers or mediators would not have enough time to spend on each case. When a lawyer invoices more than 2000 hours in a year, he or she receives a lower maximum of certificates the next year.

The Knowledge Centre Legal Aid System conducts independent research into the legal aid system. Together with stakeholders, it works to harness data and knowledge for the sustainability of the system. The Knowledge Centre conducts programme-based research, monitoring and evaluation research and ad hoc research. The programmatic research is done on the basis of an annual plan determined by the programme board. The programmatic research is designed around two lines of research: first, the citizen and his need for and experiences with legal services, legal aid and mediation and second, the supply of legal assistance, legal aid and mediation. Within these lines, different themes are outlined on which the research focuses.

The Knowledge Centre currently works on designing and implementing a more structural feedback loop, of which the experiences of citizens both with their lawyer or mediator and with procedures within the legal aid system are a key component.

In 2025, the Knowledge Centre commenced with collection of empirical data that supports quality monitoring. For the special arrangement for people affected by the childcare benefits scandal, the LAB – in cooperation with the Bar Association – implemented a peer review system. In addition to quality improvement, a main objective is to use it for this data collection. Peer reviewers use a form developed by the Knowledge Centre for “scoring” case files per predefined theme. Reviewers score five files per randomly selected lawyer that participates under the special arrangement. Each of such file is scored on a separate form. In the course of 2025, the Knowledge Centre presents a first quality monitor that is based on these data and will further develop it in the coming period.



Peer review already was implemented for legal aid lawyers working in asylum cases. They work with very vulnerable clients with little possibilities to complain. All lawyers agreed to implement a peer review system via a democratic vote. They also elect the peers who conduct the peer review. Peers review the files of the lawyers regularly, attend court sessions, and monitor new asylum lawyers. In 2020, the Bar Association made it compulsory for all lawyers to dedicate a certain amount of time each year to supervision or peer review. They receive points in return, as part of the permanent education.

All mediators registered with the Legal Aid Board are registered with the Mediation Federation Netherlands and must conduct a peer review successfully once in every three years.





## 7 Public Legal Education

*Initiatives in last two years to increase public awareness of the availability of Publicly Funded Legal Services/ legal aid in your jurisdiction and how to access it. (Include any particular approach for those in remote areas or those with special legal needs e.g. the elderly or victims of domestic violence). Has there been a country wide Needs Assessment study in your jurisdiction in recent years, looking at the distribution of justiciable problems and how the public respond to them? Date of last needs assessment? Executed by?*

To improve the provision of information from the government, the ministry of Justice and Security works on updating the central government website to improve information on the various forms of dispute resolution. Plan is to increasingly develop videos and other visual material. In addition, efforts are being made to raise awareness of and provide information on restorative justice facilities. The website of the Legal Service Counter is being improved on an ongoing basis and efforts are being made to improve the provision of information by the judiciary.<sup>20</sup> In December 2024, the new Minister for legal protection wrote a progress letter on the topic of access to justice. To strengthen access to justice and plans described above, €35.6 million will be structurally released for this purpose from 2027 onwards. For 2025 and 2026, additional money will also be freed up to work on the above plans<sup>21</sup>.

In recent years, several pilots, such as the development of low-threshold digital platforms and websites where citizens can go to when they have a legal conflict, also have provided meaningful insights for development of the legal aid system. Research has shown that the findability of new digital services needs to improve and that a culture change is needed that promotes cooperation between legal aid providers. In this way, citizens receive an integrated approach to their problems. Merging the insights from the pilots and studies can provide increased public awareness of the availability of legal aid and how to access this.<sup>22</sup>

As previously described, the LAB also continues to develop applications that make legal aid accessible to legal aid seekers. Rechtwijzer is an example of this.

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<sup>20</sup> [Kamerbrief over aanpak versterking toegang tot het recht | Kamerstuk | Rijksoverheid.nl](#)

<sup>21</sup> [Rechtsstaat en Rechtsorde | Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal](#)

<sup>22</sup> [Kansen voor stelselwijziging rechtsbijstand verkend | Nieuwsbericht | WODC - Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Datacentrum](#)



## 8 Alternative Sources of Legal Aid services

*What are the other principal sources of legal help for disadvantaged citizens in your jurisdiction, and how many clients do they assist annually (e.g. legal expenses insurance, trade unions, consumers organisation claims companies, community law clinics, university law clinics, local charities, NGOs etc). Is the use of Internet tools e.g Rechtwijzer, Rocket lawyer, legal databases etc. increasing in your jurisdiction?*

Outside of the legal aid system, there are other possibilities to seek legal assistance. To some extent, trade unions and consumer organizations provide legal aid. Around 40% of the households in the Netherlands have a legal protection insurance policy.<sup>23</sup> In addition to legal aid insurance, legal aid insurers offer pre-paid legal aid at fixed prices.

People can additionally seek help from social-legal counselors (social raadslieden) and law clinics (rechts- and wetswinkels, who are often linked to universities where law students help people with legal problems). Unfortunately, there is no data of the number of clients for these organisations.

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<sup>23</sup> [Gevolgen van mogelijk duurdere rechtsbijstandsverzekering door uitspraak Europese hof onderzocht | Nieuwsbericht | WODC - Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Datacentrum](#)



## 9 Holistic legal services

*Is your jurisdiction exploring link ups between legal services providers and non-lawyer professionals e.g. health / justice partnerships, social work / justice collaboration, or other forms of “one stop shop”?*

One of the goals of the current legal aid reform is to establish strong collaborations between legal aid services and social and communal services. The Legal Service Counters have a coordinating role in establishing local and regional collaborations. In addition, the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (Divosa) and Social Work Netherlands received funding from the Ministry of J&S for setting up and strengthening ‘robust first tier legal aid’ in all 342 municipalities in the Netherlands. An amount of 25 million euros has been allocated for this purpose. Divosa and Social Work Netherlands will support municipalities in developing the form and content of this program. In 2026, the government will assess how the investment has turned out.<sup>24</sup>

Another example of collaborations between legal and non-legal workers is driven by the Dutch Judiciary. In some cities community courts and neighbourhood judges are set up. They work in collaboration with local organisations, and with publicly funded legal aid lawyers.

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<sup>24</sup> [Pilot succesvol: structureel 25 miljoen voor betere rechtshulp - Sociaal Werk Nederland](#)



## 10 UN SDG Standard 16.3

*Please identify any steps being taken to articulate and elaborate Sustainable Development Goal 16.3 in your jurisdiction.*

Since 2018, a revision program for the legal aid system is in place, with the objective to have realised a renewed and learning system in 2026. The people-centred approach, which puts people and the problems as they experience them more to the centre than the legal interpretations of them, is still very much in focus. This translates to more people-centred policies and practices at organizations like the LAB, expressly seeking the margin of appreciation in specific hardship cases.



## 11 Other

### *Most innovative project 2023-24*

#### *The Knowledge Centre Legal Aid System (Kenniscentrum Stelsel Gesubsideerde Rechtsbijstand)*

The Knowledge Centre was established to stimulate and facilitate an evidence-based system in which decisions are based on knowledge and data. The Knowledge Centre conducts independent research into the legal aid system since 2020 and continues to harness data and knowledge for the sustainability of the system together with stakeholders. The programmatic part of its research is conducted within the framework of a research programme, which is established by its Programmatic Board. The board members of the LAB, the Legal Services Counters, the Dutch Bar Association, the Mediators Federation Netherlands, and the director legal system of the ministry of Justice and Security have a seat in this Programmatic Board. This ensures that the needs of stakeholders are well covered by the research programme.

#### *Community court funding scheme*

The funding scheme for legal aid in community courts is applicable from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2024. Under this scheme, lawyers can apply for a surcharge in cases whose proceedings serve in a community court setting. In community courts, the lawyer has an important role to play as a strong independent case manager for the litigant, in solving diverse, multiple problems of people in particular neighbourhoods. Here, a lawyer performs more work than when handling a regular case. For now, the scheme is valid for a period of two years. The aim is for the surcharge to become a structural part of the fee system and to be given a place in the Legal Aid Act.<sup>25</sup>

#### *National socio-legal map Divosa*

Research shows that the supply of socio-legal support is very fragmented and difficult to find, because it is offered under different names and by a range of organisations. To get a better overview, the national socio-legal map is created. On 25<sup>th</sup> of March 2025, Divosa launched the Netherlands' first digital national socio-legal map for professionals. This map provides one central place where professionals can quickly and easily see what socio-legal offerings are available nearby, including contact details for a warm referral of residents.<sup>26</sup>

#### *Groningen Mining Damage Subsidy Scheme*

From July 1<sup>st</sup> 2023, house owners facing damage as a result of natural gas extraction can get free legal aid and mediation.

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<sup>25</sup> [Toeslag wijkrechtspraak landelijk van kracht - rvr.org](https://www.rvr.org)

<sup>26</sup> [Lancering sociaaljuridische kaart | Divosa](#)



### *Whistleblowers' subsidy scheme*

From the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2024, a person who reports wrongdoing to the House for Whistleblowers can be referred for legal support and apply for free legal aid or mediation through the LAB.

### *Grant scheme in case of attachment of income and/or assets*

From September 1<sup>st</sup> 2024, litigants who, given the level of their income, are not eligible for legal aid or are faced with a high personal contribution, but are unable to use their income or assets as a result of confiscation, can apply for legal aid. Seizure of the partner's income or assets is also taken into account.

### *Innovation project*

From the Innovation Project, there are several initiatives:

- Intensive cooperation with universities in order to interest students in the profession of legal aid lawyer (curriculum development, guest lectures, etc.)
- Subsidy scheme for vocational education
- Chair at the University of Amsterdam on Access to Justice and Legal Aid
- Attention to digitalisation, including the Perspective Newspaper and the Perspective Tour
- Platform for inspiration and exchange, combined with workshops led by experts in legal innovation.

### *Matching*

Innovative service of the LAB where citizens in need get matched by a number of lawyers that are suitable for their problem, situation and preferences. On the basis of diagnosis information, the LAB presents citizens with 3 lawyers that are a) available, b) are located near the citizen, c) have the required specialisation, and d) otherwise meets their preferences. Citizens can bring their case to one of these lawyers.

The matching service was implemented for a number of legal domains (including childcare benefits cases, mining damage cases, asylum cases) and currently is implemented in number of regions (in cooperation with the Legal Services Counter).

Matching smoothen the path to justice for citizens by making it easier to find a good and appropriate lawyer. Additionally, it enables the LAB to closely monitor how balanced demand and supply are, and identify whether measures would be required for certain regions and/or legal domains.

### *Peer review*

As described above, a recent development is that peer review is also being used in the Childcare Benefit recovery scheme and from 2026 it is expected to be used in Mining Damage cases. The purpose of the peer review is twofold. First of all, reviewers collect data about the legal quality delivered in individual cases. These data are shared with the Knowledge Centre that develops a legal quality monitor for the legal aid system with these data. Second, reflective dialogues between the reviewer and reviewed lawyer enhance the quality of legal aid.



### *Most worrisome trend 2023-24*

The decline in the number of legal aid lawyers. The reason for this decline is that many legal aid lawyers are reaching the retirement age and many novice legal aid lawyers are opting for the commercial legal profession.

### *Biggest challenge for 2025*

A steady downward trend in the number of legal aid lawyers that is steadily aging combined with limited young lawyers registering for legal aid remain one of the biggest challenges. A recent advice report by a commission created by the ministry described how law firms (contrasted to solo lawyer practices) are critical from the perspective of education of young lawyers, and broader sustainability and quality. The benchmark income is not attainable for lawyers who work in a firm with 5-10 lawyers due to higher overhead costs. Simultaneously, the past years saw an increase of solo lawyer practices (proverbially practising from their kitchen table). It is difficult if not impossible to train a young, starting lawyer in such context. The recommendation of the special committee, hence, was to introduce an office surcharge.<sup>27</sup> Lawyers working in an office incur more necessary costs, as a result of which they currently do not come close to the income they should achieve as set by the government. Therefore, the committee recommends this office surcharge. This promotes lawyers to organise in law firms and consequently promotes the creation of training places for young, new lawyers, a necessity for a future-proof and sustainable system of legal aid lawyers and legal aid.

### *Something about Covid-19 effects?*

We no longer see any effects as a result of Covid-19.

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

New are the arrangements for those affected by gas extraction in Groningen (Mining Damage Scheme), the whistleblowers' scheme and the scheme where a seizure of income or assets can be taken into account.

From January 1<sup>st</sup> 2024, the community court grant scheme is applied. Community court is a form of justice that brings the legal world and the social domain closer together and closer to the people. Cases are heard in an annex of that district court that is located in the middle of the community. This setting is less formal than a traditional court<sup>28</sup>.

Under the scheme, lawyers can apply for a surcharge in add-on cases whose proceedings serve in a community court location. This surcharge applies to a number of community courts and is likely to be extended to several locations<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> [Rapport 'Veranderde tijden' commissie Van der Meer II gepresenteerd - rvr.org](#)

<sup>28</sup> [Wijkrechtspraak: rechtspraak dichtbij bewoners - WijkWijzer - Platform voor leefbare en veilige wijken](#)

<sup>29</sup> [Toeslag wijkrechtspraak landelijk van kracht - rvr.org](#)





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