



**International
Legal Aid Group**

*“First Online Courtroom Hearings to Pave Way
for Digital Justice” – The Guardian*

Issue #41

Spring 2018

Foreword

Professor Alan Paterson, Chair, International Legal Aid Group

Welcome to the April 2018 newsletter. We have a range of stimulating articles for you in this issue and grateful thanks are due to the authors, (to Peter van den Biggelaar, co Vice-Chair of ILAG , who helped to co-ordinate the issue) and to Paul Ferrie, our industrious webmaster for the news items he has compiled and for the lay out of the publication. This is a time of very considerable activity in the legal aid world globally as this newsletter testifies. The Council of Europe has a suite of projects ranging from the one in Macedonia, which Agris reports on here, to one in Ukraine on the independence of Legal Aid Authorities, which involves Peter and I. The Bulgarian initiative reported on here by Ivan is backed by the EU. The World Bank is looking at a cost benefit analysis for legal aid programmes and the International Bar Association continues to work on a legal aid project headed by Lucy Scott Moncrieff. In Scotland an independent review of Legal Aid ([the Evans Report](#)) initiated by the Government has now reported (more of this in the next newsletter) and in England and Wales a review of the impact of LASPO has been commissioned by the Government also. The UNODC has recently held an international legal aid conference in China (see Valerie and Anika’s report) and UCL Centre for Empirical Legal Studies hold their conference in June of 2018. The next ILAG conference is in Ottawa in June 2019 (more details in the next newsletter). We have research projects aplenty – amongst the latest of which is Tamara Butter’s on Asylum Seekers in the Netherlands and in England (see Newsletter), and Vicky Kemp’s comparative studies on legal aid in police stations. Corry brings us up to date on Rechtwijzer Version 3 in this issue and if this makes you want to read more about legal aid and technology look at Roger Smith’s blog on the subject. Lots of food for thought. Happy reading!

Legal Aid Reform in Macedonia

Agris Batalauskis, Head of Project Department Ministry of Justice, key expert in the Twinning project MK 11 IB JH 03 15 “Strengthening the Rule of Law” and expert in European Union and Council of Europe programmatic framework “Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey” action “Support to legal aid reforms in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”.

Macedonia has a recent history, when it comes to free legal aid. The concept of free legal aid and the first real steps towards exercising the right to equal access to justice in Macedonia where taken in 2009 – with the adoption of the Law on Free Legal Aid.

What was supposed to be a giant leap forward in the justice sector, turned out to be just a small nudge in the right direction. It is well known that equal access to justice is a fundamental human right, that must be

guaranteed and practically exercised by the state, and which also indisputably includes the right to free legal aid. Usually such a right should be guaranteed by the highest legal act in the country – the constitution. In Macedonia that is not exactly the case. Instead it is interpreted, that it derives indirectly from the provisions that guaranty equality of all citizens in Macedonia.

Implementation of the Law on Free Legal Aid started in July 2010 and until now every assessment done has come to the same conclusion, that the law fails to achieve its main purpose – to facilitate access to justice to persons in a situation where they are not able to protect their rights in any other way.

For that reason, the Ministry of Justice of Macedonia in 2015 initiated the implementation of the Twinning project MK 11 IB JH 03 15 “Strengthening the Rule of Law”, which was won by the consortium of Latvia and Croatia (both Ministries of Justice). Within the Twinning project one of the main priorities was free legal aid and with the help of international experts the main aim was to analyse the free legal aid system and to initiate a comprehensive reform of the system.

During the Twinning project a comprehensive assessment of the free legal aid system was done and with no surprise the conclusion was made, that the current Law of Free Legal Aid is not working properly. The analysis concludes that the law fails to achieve its main purpose - it is too restrictive, filled with regulations which are riddled with loopholes and legal uncertainty, without a clear structure or outline of procedures and deadlines, without indications of the obligations and duties of each stakeholder, etc.

Therefore, in 2016 after the assessment and recommendation of the Twinning project it was decided by the Ministry of Justice of Macedonia, with the assistance of the

Twinning project experts to draft and adopt a completely new Law on Free Legal Aid. Already in 2016 the Ministry of Justice of Macedonia established an official cross-sectorial working group, which with the assistance of the international experts was entrusted with the task to draft a new Law of Free Legal Aid.

The main aim was to create a working, efficient, transparent free legal aid mechanism in civil and administrative matters. In practice it meant that the whole law had to be re-draft:

- to create a clear structure for the law,
- to create a clear distinction between preliminary and secondary legal aid,
- to introduce a clear outline of task and duties of each stakeholder within the system;
- to introduce clear and practically implementable deadlines;
- to develop a completely new means and merit test;
- to introduce an urgent procedure for secondary legal aid;
- to decentralize the decision-making process;
- to introduce a quality assurance mechanism;
- to introduce a free legal aid reimbursement mechanism;
- to introduce a procedure for termination of secondary legal aid;
- to adjust the registration process of secondary legal aid providers and introduce a secondary legal aid provider appointment mechanism.

Not without challenges, big steps were taken to fulfil the mentioned task and on the 20th of February 2018 the new draft Law of Free Legal Aid was adopted by the government of the Republic of Macedonia and was submitted to the Parliament.

Although it must be mentioned, that there is no happy ending for this story yet, because in March the Parliament sent the draft back to the Government. The main reasons for that is the Bar associations and the NGO sector dissatisfaction with the new draft law. For the Bar associations the main problem is linked with the new outline of secondary legal aid fees and for the NGO sector with the scope and defined fees for preliminary legal aid.

In addition, there is another fortunate development in Macedonia – within the framework of the European Union and Council of Europe programmatic framework “Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey” (Horizontal

Re-Inventing Rechtwijzer: (Almost) Ready to Go (Again)

By Corry van Zeeland – previously lead developer of Rechtwijzer 1.0 at Tilburg University, team member of Rechtwijzer 2.0 at HiiL – presently project leader of Rechtwijzer 3.0 at the Dutch Legal Aid Board – contact c.vzeeland@rvr.org

Since the demise of Rechtwijzer 2.0 in 2017, many ‘lovers and haters’ have speculated what would happen to the once renowned frontrunner of digital access to justice for citizens with low incomes. Would it end there? Early sparks of hope for a revival emerged when Justice42 re-launched the drastically improved divorce platform uitelkaar.nl.

We at the Legal Aid Board have been keeping under the radar for a while. Of course, we wept a little when the divorce platform went down and yes, we needed some time to lick our wounds and gather new strength. But here we are again, back on our feet: a new strategy has been carved

Facility) implementation of a new actions “Support to legal aid reforms in the “former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” has been initiated by the Council of Europe. The aim of this Action is to support and strengthen the Regional Offices of the Ministry of Justice in improving the provision of the legal aid services and their quality in line with European standards and practice.

Basically, it means that for the next year or so additional assistance to the Ministry of Justice of Macedonia concerning the free legal aid system reforms, especially regarding the challenges connected to the implementations of the new law, can be and will be provided.

out, exciting plans have been made, and now we’re ready to go again.

New Strategy

Rechtwijzer offers guided pathways for the most common legal problems. Reverting to the design of Rechtwijzer 1.0, we are now in the process of brushing-up the existing ones and developing new justice journeys. What’s new under the sun, you may think. Well, new is its gateway function. Rechtwijzer 3.0 combines publicly run guided pathways with products and services offered by commercial service providers. Not every provider will be able to gain access to Rechtwijzer. A set of rigorous quality criteria has been developed, ranging from criteria assessing the company offering the product/service and the business case; criteria assessing the user-friendliness of the tool and its potential for user empowerment; criteria for surveying client satisfaction, as well as other requirements. An independent commission has been set-up to advise the LAB on the applications. This way we ensure the delivery of quality products by reliable, sustainable companies.

As a result, Justice42 now offers its platform on Rechtwijzer, with public legal aid available for the low-income clients of uitelkaar.nl. Around 40% of the users are indeed eligible for legal aid, showing that at least a considerable part of the citizens eligible for legal aid is capable of using online services. The second private provider who has gained access to Rechtwijzer is MagOntslag. This tool, which helps assess the legal merits of a dismissal case, was developed by the Arbeidsmarktresearch Institute of the University of Amsterdam. We continue to scout for more innovative products and services.

Guided Pathways

Law students from the Tilburg Juridische Hogeschool Avans & Fontys are currently working on new pathways covering four administrative disputes. The partnership with the Tilburg School will be continued in the next years, and collaboration with other schools with legal tech departments will be sought, ensuring that online justice journeys will be available for most of the problems of everyday life.

Other Tools

Another project in the pipeline is the Quick Scan Multi-Problems. The quick scan will be developed in cooperation with MIND Korrelatie, a renowned, nationwide organisation offering telephone and online support to people with social and psychological problems. Inspired by the Canadian legal health check-up and building upon the Dutch pilot Early Signaling Multi-Problems, the quick scan enables a user to assess five life areas - family & relationship, health, work, housing and money – and a number of life events that, combined or by itself, often result in entangled and prolonged problems. The quick scan will offer just-in-time information, a printable

advice, online or phone support from MIND Korrelatie and referrals to the Juridisch Loket (legal counters) and other local service providers.

With a national consumer organisation, we are exploring the option of developing a Cost Assessment Tool, helping citizens to make informed choices about employing legal service providers. Its basic structure is simple. Step one starts with the question: *What is the monetary value of the legal problem?* Step two asks: *How much time and money have you already spent on solving the problem?* Step three looks into the future: *How much time and money are you willing to spend on solving the problem?* And step four finally provides a visualised overview of the answers and a comparison of the investment in time and cost per service provider (including the do-it-yourself option) if further action would be taken.

Testing Ground

Finally, taking Roger Smith's advice on "the need for 'warm bodies' to supplement cold technology" to heart, preparations are being made for a brand new and very exciting initiative starting early 2019: a testing ground for Rechtwijzer in the Tilburg Public Library. Together with the public library, the Juridische Hogeschool Avans & Fontys, the Law Clinic, the Juridisch Loket and the municipality, an experimental space featuring Rechtwijzer and additional offline services will be set up in the new accommodation of the library, the former locomotive station (fun fact: the architect who designed the Library of Birmingham will do the interior design of the Tilburg Library).

Citizens visiting the library can use the computers to navigate the guided pathways on Rechtwijzer. Students are available for assistance twice a week, and the Law Clinic and the Juridisch Loket are on call if needed. Also a hotline with the municipality

will be established, which is particularly useful in case of an emerging administrative dispute. In addition, the library provides courses like Klik&Tik (Click&Tick) and Digisterker (Digi-Stronger) to citizens who lack the basic skills to use the computer.

Transition

The present reforms in the Netherlands towards a legal aid system aimed at preventing and containing problems and

Improving the Access to Legal Aid in Pretrial Criminal Cases in Bulgaria: Key Project Results

Ivanka Ivanova, PhD, Open Society Institute – Sofia, Project Manager

For any inquiries related to the project, please email: iivanova@osi.bg

At the end of January 2018 Open Society Institute – Sofia (a Bulgarian non-for-profit organization) and the National Legal Aid Bureau (NLAB) completed the implementation of an 18-months project *Improving Access to Legal Aid in the Pre-Trial Phase of Criminal Proceedings in Bulgaria*.

The project was funded under the Justice Program of the EU (2014-2020) and its main task was to contribute to the correct implementation of the Directive (EU) 2016/1919 on legal aid for suspects and accused persons in criminal proceedings, of the Commission Recommendation C(2013)8179/2 on the right to legal aid in criminal proceedings and Commission Recommendation C(2013)8178/2 on safeguards for vulnerable persons suspected or accused in criminal proceedings.

conflicts, can be phrased in four key words: *local* – provide support and solutions close to the homes of people; *integral* – take a holistic view on problems, and offer integrated services when needed; *multi-channel* – create a smart mix of online and offline help; and *final* – work proactively on final, fitting solutions. This is exactly what the testing ground is about.

We have a lot of irons in the fire. Now let's make it happen!

The main project activities consisted in research and evaluation of the access to legal aid in the pretrial phase of criminal

proceedings in Bulgaria and the development of quality standards for legal aid provision in such cases. The Legal Aid Board of the Netherlands participated as an associate partner, which gave an opportunity for the Bulgarian NLAB to study the Dutch model for provision of early access to effective legal aid in criminal cases.

Why Such a Project in Bulgaria?

Prior to Bulgaria's accession to the EU the national legal aid system was reformed and modernised. In 2005 the Parliament adopted a special Legal Aid Act (LLA) and in 2006 the NLAB was established as a specialized institution responsible for disbursing the national legal aid budget (about 4.5 million € in 2017). Under the LLA the responsibility for the management of the national legal aid system is shared between the regional bar councils and the NLAB. The NLAB is responsible for maintaining the registry with the legal aid lawyers, for assessing their reports for legal aid provided, for determining the remuneration to be paid in each case and for disbursing the payment. There are 27 regional bar councils, which are responsible for the distribution of cases between the legal aid lawyers, monitoring their performance (including the quality of legal

aid) and organizing the in-service training of the lawyers.

With a staff of 23 people, the NLAB is processing annually around 40,000 individual legal aid reports from defence lawyers. The NLAB suffers from permanent understaffing and does not have a proper capacity to research legal aid needs of its clients. Prior to the project's implementation there was very little available data on the access to legal aid in the pretrial phase of criminal proceedings in the country and practically no information on the demographic profile of the legal aid clients in criminal cases. The lack of reliable data is impeding the evaluation of the results from the reform measures already taken on national level and the planning of appropriate resources for effective legal aid provision as requested by the national law and relevant EU legislation.

Main Research Results

The first research activity of the project was to conduct a comparative legal analysis on the safeguards of the quality of legal aid in the pretrial phase of criminal proceedings in selected EU member states. The study presented to the Bulgarian professional audience the main theoretical approaches towards defining the concept of "quality" of legal services and described the methods used specifically for safeguarding and monitoring the quality of legal aid: requirements for specialization and continuing professional education of the legal aid providers, their professional liability, the use of customers complaints review mechanisms and customers satisfaction surveys, the use of quality audit, quality marks and peer review.

The second research activity of the project consisted in collecting quantitative information on the access to legal aid in pretrial criminal cases in Bulgaria. Based on

a review of a representative sample of the defence lawyers' reports to the NLAB, the team estimated that the legal aid granted in 2015 covered only between 6 and 34% of all pending pre-trial proceedings. The report also identified the prevalence of vulnerable defendants in legal aid cases – 10% of the defendants using legal aid in pretrial criminal cases in 2015 were minors, about 20% were detained, 11% were foreign nationals, 16% did not speak Bulgarian. In spite the fact that according to the documents almost all defendants have completed at least the minimum level of obligatory education, many of the defendants were reported to be illiterate.

The study also collected important information about the demographic profile of the legal aid defenders, the regional distribution of legal aid cases and their most typical outcomes. The quantitative study also showed that there were a couple of indicators that could be exploited potentially as indicators for the quality of the legal services provided, i.e. the share of the plea bargaining or the custodial remand measures amongst the criminal cases where legal aid was granted compared to the average for all criminal cases. On the long run this quantitative survey can serve as a point of reference to assess the effects of changes in the national legislation and the implementation of the relevant EU instruments in the field.

New Instruments Developed

Based on the research results and the study of the Dutch example, the NLAB team developed draft *Standards for quality of the legal aid in the pretrial phase of criminal proceedings*. The text provides a summary of the main existing legal and professional standards that are obligatory for the criminal defence lawyers and it is meant as a support tool for the NLAB and the local bar councils in monitoring and assessing the quality of the legal aid. As of this stage

the draft text is still under consultations and it is not clear whether or not it will be adopted as a normative act of the NLAB.

The project team also developed *Guidelines for legal aid clients* – a publication that explains in common language the fundamental rights of defendants in criminal cases and the legal and ethical

standards their lawyers ought to respect. The publication is distributed through the legal aid lawyers and in the pre-trial detention facilities and it is expected to contribute to the increase of public awareness about the right to legal aid in Bulgaria.

Asylum Legal Aid Lawyers' Professional Ethics in Practice: A Study into the Professional Decision Making of Asylum Legal Aid Lawyers in the Netherlands and England

Dr. Tamara Butter, University of Amsterdam.¹

This piece provides an overview of Tamara's dissertation. An elaborate summary is available [here](#)²

The way in which asylum lawyers do their work, especially when operating within a state's legal aid system, is a topic of continuous debate.³ Legal aid lawyers are criticised for not putting in sufficient time and effort in assisting their asylum-seeking clients and for 'cherry picking' profitable cases, as well as for undermining the law and 'playing the system' by starting procedure after procedure in so-called 'hopeless cases'. Doing so excessively burdens the administrative and judicial system as well as the legal aid budget. The discussions and criticism about the ways in which asylum legal aid lawyers do their work are essentially about how these lawyers deal and should deal with the different (and at times competing) interests at stake when assisting their asylum seeking clients under the legal aid scheme: these are questions of lawyers' professional ethics.

The particulars of asylum seekers as a clientele, the politically sensitive, complex and sometimes ambiguous nature of asylum law combined with the organisational aspects of both the asylum and legal aid system (the institutional context) in which lawyers operate make the practice area of publicly funded asylum law ethically challenging. Previous research and

¹ Dr. Tamara Butter obtained her PhD from the Radboud University Nijmegen in January 2018. Her project entitled 'Asylum Legal Aid Lawyers' Professional Ethics in Practice' consisted of a multiple case study into the professional decision making of asylum legal aid lawyers in the Netherlands and England. She conducted part of her research as a visiting scholar at the Centre for the Study of Legal Professional Practice at City University London. In 2014 she was awarded the Frye Stipendium for promising female PhD candidates. This grant allowed for her stay as a visiting scholar at the American Bar Foundation in Chicago in 2015. After completing her PhD project she worked as a lecturer at the Radboud University's Civil Law department. Tamara Butter is currently Assistant Professor in Sociology of Law and also teaches at the

² <https://www2.ru.nl/cms/dissertation-summary-TButter.pdf>. The link to the full dissertation will become available in July 2018. The book is published by Eleven International Publishing <https://www.elevenpub.com/law/catalogus/asylum-legal-aid-lawyers-professional-ethics-in-practice-1-2018#>

³ See e.g. 'Asieladvocaten "strooien zand in de machine"', NRC, 20 december, 2001; Laemers & De Groot-van Leeuwen (2004); Jacobs et al. (2006); Sillevs Smitt (2012); Butter, Laemers & Terlouw (2013); 'Asylum seeker charities are just playing the system, says Woolas', Guardian, 18 November, 2008; <http://www.irr.org.uk/news/asylum-seekers-wrongly-refused-legal-aid/>; Sanderson & Sommerlad (2011), p. 185 ff.; Gibbs & Hughes-Roberts (2012), p. 20.

contributions of lawyers who engaged in discussions on the provision of legal aid in asylum cases have shown that this institutional context in which lawyers operate, may cause ethical pressures.⁴ Lawyers have described the difficulties in providing what they consider high quality legal assistance under the circumstances in which they have to work.

The central aim of this study was to obtain a better understanding of asylum legal aid lawyers' professional ethics in practice, i.e. how these lawyers as members of the legal profession balance the different interests at stake when assisting their asylum seeking clients under the state's legal aid scheme, and to explore the role of the institutional context in that regard. In order to reach these aims, I examined the *professional decision making* of asylum legal aid lawyers in two different institutional contexts: the Netherlands and England. Professional decision making is defined in this study as the ways in which lawyers go about making decisions on ethical issues, that is, what I understand to be in line with Moorhead et al., how they balance the client's interest, the public interest in the administration of justice and the lawyer's interests in profit or survival.⁵

The research consists of a multiple case study in which I examined both the contexts in which asylum legal aid lawyers operate and their professional decision-making. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews with asylum legal aid lawyers (22 per case, a total of 44) constituted the core of the case studies. I selected varied groups of respondents (purposive sampling) and examined their professional decision making in respect of two ethical issues: 'time vs money' and 'hopeless cases'. The former primarily served as a preliminary issue in order to explore the morality versus market pressures legal aid lawyers are confronted with within the particular institutional context in which they operate and the running of a legal aid practice in this context; its purpose was to comprehend the lawyers' interest in profit or survival in the context in which the balancing act takes place. The issue of the 'hopeless case' constituted the central issue through which I examined the balancing act. Following an initial inductive analysis, I analysed and sought to interpret respondents' decision making by employing an analytical framework consisting of four approaches to moral reasoning in legal practice that foreground either the client's interest or the public interest based on role morality or personal morality – adversarial advocacy, dutiful lawyering, moral activism and relational lawyering⁶ – (morality) and its relation to the lawyer's interest in profit or survival (market).

This study shows how the circumstances of the case (the nature of the case, the stage of the procedure and the nature of the client) and lawyers' views on the morality of the law and the legal system in the area of asylum law play a role in asylum lawyers' professional decision making – that is, in how the balancing act ultimately plays out and whether the client's interest or the public interest is given more weight based on role morality or personal morality. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of the analyses of the Dutch and the English cases exposes how both the institutional context (the characteristics of the asylum and legal aid system, i.e. the lawyer's institutional position and accompanying payment structures) *and* the professional context (the professional regime and the national legal culture) within which asylum legal aid lawyers operate shape their decision making.

⁴ E.g. James & Killick (2010; 2012); Terlouw (2011); Sommerlad (2008); Webber (2012); Bogaers (2009); Hoftijzer (2003); Koers (2001).

⁵ Moorhead et al (2012), p. 7.

⁶ Based on the work of Parker (2004).

Cross-Regional Seminar on ‘Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems – Holistic Services, Equity in Access & Quality Assurance’

Ms. Valérie Lebaux, Chief, Justice Section UNODC and Ms. Anika Holterhof, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer UNODC

Over the past years, China has made strides in the application of the *United Nations Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems*, with a network of over 3000 centres delivering services across the country, aiming at reaching populations in remote locations and establishing quality standards and mechanisms to assess, monitor and improve quality of services delivered. China and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) have been members of ILAG for several years, and Prof. Alan Paterson has been lending his expertise to the work of the United Nations for past projects such as the UNDP/UNODC Global Study on Legal Aid, so the seminar provided an excellent opportunity to bring everybody together to discuss and exchange experiences on pressing issues that legal aid practitioners are facing across the region, and the world. Discussions also focused on approaches that would meet the specific needs of clients with vulnerabilities.



The seminar, jointly organized by UNODC and the Ministry of Justice of the People’s Republic of China and hosted by the Guangdong Provincial Department of Justice in Guangzhou City from 24-26 January 2018, was attended by practitioners and academic researchers from 15 Chinese provinces and municipalities and the Ministry of Justice, and legal aid experts from Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Thailand and Vietnam.

A group of foreign experts including ILAG Chair, Co-Chair and members Prof. Alan Paterson, Peter van den Biggelaar, Brian Nair and Merja Muilu, as well as UNODC partners Nicolás Laino and Mary Gontar from the Public Defender’s Offices of Argentina and Israel, shared their input and expertise on projects and developments in their national systems, and guided working group discussions on the newly introduced Chinese duty lawyer scheme.

Participants engaged in lively discussions on various issues related to the three overarching topics – quality assurance, holistic services and equity in access, which are closely linked: Making sure that legal aid providers have the necessary skills to cater to the needs of specific groups is part of providing high-quality legal aid. This includes a holistic approach that is

centred on the needs of clients, and applies a multi-sectorial approach to addressing their needs, including beyond the criminal case. Measures to expand services and ensure effectiveness of legal aid delivery systems – by improving the management of these systems – have a direct impact on the quality of the overall performance of criminal justice systems. Therefore, quality assurance of legal aid services was at the heart of the Seminar’s deliberations, and was explored at the level of institutions, individual providers, and specific clients.



Following the event, foreign experts visited the duty lawyer station at the Provincial Court to learn about the provision of legal aid in criminal matters and the Guangzhou Municipal Legal Aid Center, the first of its kind established in China. The Center makes extensive use of new technology and social media to raise awareness and reach more beneficiaries – for example with hotlines and an

extensive offer of services and information online, and robots and other machines in the service station that deliver information on basic legal problems, eligibility to receive legal aid, and how to apply for services.

A short report of the seminar will be shared with UN Member States at the 2018 session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Vienna in May 2018, and will be available online on the UNODC website.

UNODC is most grateful to the Chinese government and all the experts making this seminar a success through an open and detailed exchange of experiences and fostering relationships in the international legal aid community. We were warmly received by our hosts and hope to continue dialogue and sharing of experiences in years to come.

Selected ‘Legal Aid’ News from Across the World

Paul Ferrie, ILAG Online Editor & Associate Solicitor, Stirling & Mair

The news items shown below are largely compiled from articles on the internet, found on the basis of a simple search for terms such as ‘legal aid’, ‘access to justice’ and ‘pro bono’. Therefore, readers must, just as buyers, beware of authenticity. The links worked at the time of writing but some will obviously fail after a period of time.

At the outset, we would like to draw your particular attention to “*Rethinking Legal Aid, An Independent Strategic Review (The Evans Report)*”, an independent review chaired by Carnegie Trust Chief Executive Martyn Evans and supported by an expert advisory group, which lays out a ten year vision and makes sixty seven recommendations aimed at ensuring legal aid system in Scotland is simpler, user focused, more flexible, sustainable and cost-effective. For more

information on and to download the *The Evans Report*, please visit the [Scottish Government website](#).

Australia

[Dedicated Lawyers Mark 25 Years of Free After-hours Calls from Distressed Defendants](#)

– ABC News

[Legal Aid NSW Increases Bega Regional Outreach Clinic from Monthly to Weekly Service](#)

– Bombala Times

[Legal Aid Services in WA 'at Crisis Point' Without More Funding](#) – ABC News

[Low Mental Health Legal Representation in Regional Victoria Affects Patient Outcomes,](#)

[Legal Aid Says](#) – ABC News

[Online Chat Service Launched by Legal Aid](#) – The Advocate

[Price of Justice Too High for Our Poor](#) – Sunshine Coast Daily

[University of Canberra Partners with Legal Aid for Twice-Weekly Clinic](#) – Canberra Times

[Urgent Legal Aid Boost Required for Over-65s](#) – The Australian

Canada

[Alberta Government Makes Legal Aid Lawyers Available at Bail Hearings](#) – CBC News

[Alberta Defence Lawyers Demand Boost to Legal Aid](#) – The Star

[Defence Lawyers say Legal Aid 'Neglected and Degraded' in Alberta](#) – Calgary Herald

[Head of N.L. Legal Aid Applauds Plan to Remove Private Counsel Option](#) – CBC News

[Legal Aid Funding in B.C. Budget Doesn't Cover Demand for Services, CBA Says](#) – CBC

News

[Legal Aid Lawyers Demand Funding Increase from Provincial Government](#) – CBC News

[Ian Mulgrew: Legal Aid Less Than Minimum Wage, Prominent Lawyer Complains](#) –

Vancouver Sun

[New Clinic Serving Black Ontarians Gets Backing of Legal Aid](#) – The Star

[New Legal Supports for Sex Assault Survivors Fall Short, Advocates Say](#) – CBC News

[New Sexual Violence Program Offers Free Legal Aid in Saskatchewan](#) – 980 CJME

China

[Deputies Urge Higher Legal Aid Salaries](#) – ECNS

England & Wales

[Access to Justice Calls Out Government After Insurance Jobs Cull](#) – Insurance Business UK

[Bar Association Urges Strikes Over Legal Aid](#) – Financial Times

[CCLC Report Calls for Effective Access to Justice for All Children](#) – Family Law

[Creating Paths to Family Justice: Online Dispute Resolution Processes and the Access to](#)

[Justice Gap](#) – Family Law

[Criminal Defence Solicitors may be Extinct in Five Years, Says Law Society](#) – The

Guardian

[First Online Courtroom Hearings to Pave Way for Digital Justice](#) – The Guardian

[Launch of Suffolk Law Centre Brings Better Access to Legal Advice](#) – Ipswich Star

[Lawyers Call for Strike Over 'Relentless Legal Aid Cuts'](#) – The Independent

[Legal Costs Halt Thousands of Domestic Violence Cases](#) – BBC News

[Modernising the Courts: Digital Access to Justice](#) – The Global Legal Post

Poorest in Society 'Excluded' from Getting Legal Aid, Finds Report – The Independent
'Reforms Must Not be at the Expense of Justice' – The Times
Society Leads Renewed Push for Early Legal Advice – Law Society Gazette
Student Pro Bono: New Projects on Autism, Family Courts and Miscarriages of Justice Up For Awards – Legal Cheek

Ghana

Only 23 Lawyers Offer Legal Aid Services in Ghana – Amnesty International – Ghana Web

India

Access to Legal Aid in India: An Unfulfilled Promise? – Live Law
Lawyers Cannot Obstruct Access to Justice: Supreme Court on Kathua Case - NDTV
Remove Hurdles to Justice for Women with Disabilities – Human Rights Watch

Jamaica

Denham Town Residents Benefit from Legal Aid Mobile Unit - Jamaica Information Service
Legal Aid Council Safeguarding Citizens' Rights Under Enhanced Security Measures - Jamaica Information Service

Pakistan

Free Legal Aid Agency Gets Punjab Cabinet's Nod - Dawn
Pakistan: Summary of Legal Assistance and Aid Programme - UN High Commissioner for Refugees

Singapore

Legal Aid Means Test Being Reviewed to Benefit More Singaporeans – Channel News Asia
NGO Rolls Out Online Centre to Guide People Who Represent Themselves in Court – Straits Times

Scotland

Disabled People 'Missing Out' in Legal Aid Review, Says Law Centre – The Scotsman
Law Students Offer Free Legal Advice to Glasgow Shoppers – BBC News
Legal Aid Must Work for Those Who Need it - Law Society of Scotland
Review How Legal Aid Fees are Set with Urgency, Lawyers Plead – The Herald
Scottish Legal Aid Fees 'Should Be Adjusted' – The Scotsman
Scottish Legal Aid System Among Best in the World, Says Independent Review – Common Space
SLAB Welcomes Publication of Legal Aid Review Report – Scottish Legal Aid Board

Tonga

Tonga Opens Legal Aid Centre for Survivors of Domestic Violence - RNZ

United States

Justice Dept. Office to Make Legal Aid More Accessible Is Quietly Closed – The New York Times

Kentucky Could Become Third State Not to Fund Legal Aid – US News

Legal Aid for Low-Income Texans Cut Under Proposed 2019 White House Budget – Kxan

Legal Aid Study Finds: No Lawyer, No Win – The Seattle Times

Legal-Aid Services are Being Starved – The Nation

Legal Tech is Opening the System to Those Who Need Legal Representation the Most - Tech Crunch

Murphy Wants \$2.1M to Help Immigrants with Legal Aid – US News

Sessions Backtracks on Pausing Legal Aid for Immigrants Facing Deportation – The Washington Post

Tennessee Partnership Schedules Legal Aid Clinic in Chattanooga Area – Times Free Press

For more information about the work of the *International Legal Aid Group*, please visit our website which can be found at <http://www.internationallegalaidgroup.org>.