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Legal professionals involved in the asylum procedure continued to receive specific training to better support asylum applicants and vulnerable persons, in addition to enhancing the quality of services. In certain countries, the remuneration of state lawyers was scrutinised.

In France, the Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA) published specific information dedicated to lawyers working on asylum cases, on their role during the interview, the access to the case file and payment of expenses.756

In 2023, some civil society organisations arranged training for lawyers and other professionals providing legal assistance in the international protection procedure. For example, in Sweden the Refugee Centre conducted certified digital training in line with the guidelines of the Bar Association on the best interests of the child, examination of asylum cases with a focus on Afghanistan, and the revocation and termination of protection.757The Foundation for Access to Rights in Bulgaria organised a series of events to mark their 10th anniversary, including training and discussions among legal practitioners on current aspects related to refugee law.758

With the aim to better support children in the procedure for international protection, people involved in assisting unaccompanied minors, including lawyers, received specific training related to safeguards in Bulgaria759and on matters concerning guardianship in Poland.760

In Switzerland, UNHCR recommended specialised training for providers of legal assistance and representation to guide them on the identification and referral of applicants with special needs. 761

The National Romanian Council for Refugees (CNRR) mentioned that asylum seekers have frequently reported on the poor quality of services provided by state legal aid lawyers. Since a lack of training and motivation were identified as root causes for the deficiencies, CNRR provides annual informative sessions for all lawyers working in the field of international protection.762

In Switzerland, state-funded lawyers are remunerated based on a lump-sum compensation system. Asylex criticised this system, which has been in place since 2019, as having a demotivating effect for lawyers working on asylum cases because they are paid approximately CHF 2,000, irrespective of whether an appeal is submitted against a negative or an

inadmissibility decision. A reform was suggested by introducing remuneration based on performance and the possibility for the applicant to choose a legal representative.763In addition, the UNCAT expressed concerns about assigned lawyers ending their mandate if they deemed an appeal had no prospects of success.764According to information received by the UNCAT, one-third of appeals submitted without a lawyer's assistance are successful, which raises doubts on the objectivity of the assessment done by a lawyer, also because they are demotivated to submit appeals due to the payment system.765

With regard to the right of civil society organisations to access reception facilities for counselling reasons, the German Federal Administrative Court clarified that the right presupposes an express will of the asylum applicant to receive the assistance and a prior mandate allowing access to the premises. The court stated that neither national nor European legislation provides access rights for NGOs without prior authorisation by an asylum seeker. In addition, the court reiterated that the rules for access to reception premises are justified by a need to ensure safety and security of the asylum seekers.

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