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4.10 Legal assistance and representation

To mitigate the restrictive COVID-19 measures and to continue access to legal assistance, many countries organised information sessions on legal aid, either individually, in smaller groups or by replacing face-to-face interaction with phone and video calls. A number of countries also adopted new legislation or policies on accessing legal assistance and representation, with some of them extending for the first time access to legal assistance and representation at first instance.

Existing projects were expanded and cooperation with other stakeholders was strengthened, while measures were introduced to enhance the quality of services by increasing the hourly rate for lawyers and enhancing qualification requirements. Nonetheless, civil society organisations raised concerns over the course of 2020 about the hindered or insufficient access to legal assistance and representation – in part due to COVID-19 restrictions – at the border, in detention centres and in reception facilities.

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