

CCBE response to the European Commission's public consultation on EU Anti-Poverty Strategy

24 October 2025

The Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) represents the bars and law societies of 46 countries, and through them more than 1 million European lawyers. The CCBE is recognised as the voice of European lawyers, representing European Bars and Law Societies in their common interests before European and other international institutions. Defending human rights and the rule of law are central values of the CCBE.

In the Political Guidelines 2024–2029, the President of the European Commission announced the first-ever EU Anti-Poverty Strategy, which aims “to help people gain access to the essential protection and services they need, while addressing the root causes of poverty.”

In this regard, the CCBE wishes to draw attention to the need for, and importance of, access to justice as a fundamental principle of the rule of law, and to emphasise that state-funded legal aid is an essential instrument for ensuring access to justice, particularly for those with limited financial resources.

The first principle of the [1990 Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers](#) states: “All persons are entitled to call upon the assistance of a lawyer of their choice to protect and establish their rights and to defend them in all stages of criminal proceedings.” The *Basic Principles* further highlight the role and responsibility of governments: “Governments shall ensure that efficient procedures and responsive mechanisms for effective and equal access to lawyers are provided for all persons within their territory and subject to their jurisdiction, without distinction of any kind, such as discrimination based on race, colour, ethnic origin, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, economic or other status. Governments shall ensure the provision of sufficient funding and other resources for legal services to the poor and, as necessary, to other disadvantaged persons.”

The CCBE has adopted [recommendations on legal aid](#) which set out a number of guiding principles for its proper delivery, recognising legal aid as an essential tool for ensuring access to justice. The CCBE stresses that: “The sustainability of legal aid systems across Europe has been severely tested in recent years. There have been a series of unprecedented developments, including migration crises, the impact of the pandemic, and rising inflation across Europe. However volatile the circumstances, the need for legal aid remains fundamental to the rule of law and the protection of human rights. This experience highlights the need for legal aid systems to ensure that the scope of services provided is not reduced; that financial eligibility thresholds for accessing legal aid are not lowered; that budgets for legal aid services meet the demand for access to justice; that providers of legal aid are adequately state funded to ensure such access; and that factors such as inflation are appropriately recognised in budgeting and fee-setting processes.”

In its [recommendations](#), the CCBE also addresses other important aspects concerning legal aid systems and legal aid providers.

In this context, the **CCBE calls for the forthcoming EU Anti-Poverty Strategy to explicitly recognise and promote the importance of access to justice through adequately state-funded legal aid for individuals with limited financial means, as well as the essential role of lawyers as legal aid providers. The CCBE believes that such recognition would ensure the effective realisation of justice and the rule of law for all.**