



PRESS RELEASE

International Migrants Day: The CCBE recalls the crucial importance of ensuring legal assistance for all asylum seekers

18/12/2018

Today is [International Migrants Day](#), the maximum expression of overcoming adversity to live a better life and celebrated as a result of Resolution 55/93 of the United Nations General Assembly.

International Migrants Day is celebrated every 18 of December thanks to the UN's adoption of the [International Convention](#) on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

According to its preamble, the Convention was drafted due to "the importance and the extent of the migration phenomenon, which involves millions of people (...); the signatories' awareness of the "impact of the flows of migrant workers on States and people concerned, and desiring to establish norms which may contribute to the harmonization of the attitudes of States through the acceptance of basic principles concerning the treatment of migrant workers and members of their families"; as well as migrant workers' vulnerability due to leaving their countries of origin.

On this particular day, the CCBE stresses once again that the right to asylum as well as the right to an effective access to justice and the right of defence are fundamental rights in the EU legal order enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

All persons should be entitled to receive legal assistance regardless of their origin or the way in which they entered the territory of the EU. The criminalisation of assistance to irregular migrants is not acceptable.

In order to ensure free legal assistance to people in need of international protection, the "European Lawyers in Lesvos" (ELIL) initiative was launched by the CCBE and the German Bar Association in 2016 (<https://www.europeanlawyersinlesvos.eu/>). This initiative, now managed by an independent non-profit charitable organisation, provides free and independent legal assistance to asylum seekers on the Greek island of Lesvos.

These services have proved indispensable. Asylum seekers who have benefitted from their advice and assistance before a hearing by Greek asylum authorities have had a much higher rate of recognition of refugee status than asylum seekers who had not received their assistance.

This initiative, which so far is only sustained by volunteer lawyers and by donations from Bars and Law Societies, lawyers' organisations and NGOs, is urgently seeking funding in order to continue its activities. See the ELIL website for further information in particular [funding appeal](#) and [donation page](#).

About the CCBE

The CCBE represents the Bars and Law Societies of 45 countries, and through them over one million European lawyers. For more information about what the CCBE does for human rights, please consult the [Defence of the defenders initiative](#).

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