



Macedonian Young Lawyers Association

ANNUAL REPORT
2016

www.myla.org.mk

CUPIDA LEGUM IUVENTUS

Message from the Presidents

Every year is important for MYLA and our vision. This year has been especially important, since despite the challenges caused by the political climate in the country and the refugee crisis, our aspiration for a society where the rule of law has been established and where citizens actively fight for their rights- did not subdue. On the contrary, we continued our work with even greater dedication, and by expanding our team and strengthening the cooperation with our partners and institutions, we came closer to realizing our vision.

Our work focused on improving the access to legal assistance of the most marginalized groups of people in our society, and on direct involvement in the construction of a self-sustaining state system for the protection of human rights in Macedonia. The team of young professionals worked tirelessly throughout the year in order to improve the quality of the provided services, as well as to get closer to the requirements and needs of young lawyers. We believe that the large number of projects and established partnerships that MYLA managed to contract and successfully realize over the past year are sufficient evidence for the success in achieving our goals.

Our young lawyers, present on the borders with Greece and Serbia, as well as in the Reception Centres in Skopje, worked to ensure that Macedonia provides adequate access to legal assistance and legal procedures for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. We represented victims of discrimination and other violations of human rights and we managed to identify strategic cases that we hope will contribute to serious social changes in favour of the citizens.

We provided legal education and internships for a large number of young lawyers, and we also devoted ourselves to providing appropriate training in the field of human rights for representatives of the civil sector and institutions.

We hope that you will be able to find time to view this annual report and to better understand the results that we have been able to achieve during 2016, thus directly influencing the creation of a better tomorrow for all our citizens.



Martina Smilevska-Kceva
President of MYLA 2012 – 2016



Zoran Drangovski
President of MYLA

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ABOUT MYLA

Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA) is an independent, non-profit professional organisation founded in 2003, which provides legal aid and strategically litigates to protect human rights. Equipped with the knowledge and innovative capacities of young lawyers, MYLA promotes the rule of law and influences policy through research and advocacy. MYLA strives for a society in which the rule of law is established and people protectively strive for the respect of human rights.

MYLA's work focuses on:

- LEGAL AID
- LEGAL EDUCATION
- RESEARCH, POLICY AND ADVOCACY

MYLA works proactively in the following fields:

- ASYLUM AND MIGRATION
- STATELESSNESS
- DISCRIMINATION AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

MYLA is a member of several networks of organisations at regional and international level:

- European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)
- European Network on Statelessness (ENS)
- European Implementation Network (EIN)
- Triple A for Citizens
- UNITED for Intercultural Action
- Balkans Regional Rule of Law Network (BRRLN)
- Western Balkan Legal Aid Network (WeBLAN)
- International Detention Coalition (IDC)
- No Hate Speech Movement
- Network for Better Legislation-RIA Network (RIA)

2016

Key accomplishments



101.735

individuals benefited from the legal aid provided by MYLA



1001

young lawyers, attorneys, representatives from institutions and civil society were trained on different topics in the field of human rights



147

young lawyers gained practical knowledge in 34 institutions, courts and law offices in 11 cities in Macedonia



18

specific topics in the field of asylum, migration, statelessness, discrimination and human rights were researched and promoted

I LEGAL AID

On Human Rights Day, Zoran Drangovski, MYLA's President and a lawyer working for the Association for the last six years, said: „People are the ones who violate human rights, people who by disregarding laws written to protect human rights inflict injustices and ruin the foundations of the legal system in the country. We are proud of our young lawyers which are all over Macedonia, fighting for the protection of human rights through the rule of law on daily basis.“



Over the past year, Macedonian Young Lawyers Association provided legal aid and counselling for **101.735** people, of which **100.604** asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and persons under subsidiary protection; **290** stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness, **421** victims of discrimination and other human rights violations. Additionally, MYLA provided free legal aid to **420** persons in accordance with the Law on Free Legal Aid.

MYLA continued to strategically litigate at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. A total of 11 applications were submitted in 2016.



PRELIMINARY FREE LEGAL AID ACCORDING TO THE LAW ON FREE LEGAL AID

Citizens reached MYLA for free legal aid by contacting the lawyers by phone, in the offices of MYLA, by e-mail and on the website pristapdopravda.mk. A total of 420 individuals benefited from MYLA's preliminary legal assistance. In 57 cases, MYLA assisted the persons in need of legal assistance to apply for free legal aid at the Ministry of Justice. The issues that the citizens had were related to property and housing, work and family relations, social protection rights and child protection rights.

The majority of persons who received preliminary free legal aid in 2016 were residents of the Municipality of Gazi Baba, who were affected by the August 6th 2016 floods, caused by excessive rainfall in the Skopje region. During August and September 2016, 25 MYLA lawyers helped the flood victims by offering legal aid in order to deal with the damages caused in a faster and more effective way. The lawyers were available on site in the local communities of Stajkovci, Singelic and Chento in the Municipality of Gazi Baba, and provided information and advice to persons from the affected places who suffered damages from the floods in accordance with the Law on Protection and Rescue. More than 3000 households were affected by the floods, and MYLA managed to provide preliminary free legal aid to 300 persons.

A SYLUM AND MIGRATION

The beginning of 2016 was marked by the continuation of the "refugee crisis", which meant continuation of the discriminatory practices of only allowing entrance to refugees from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. On February 21, 2016, several countries in Europe, including Macedonia, closed their borders for Afghans.

MYLA provided support in the process of registration of refugees that was conducted by the border police. From January 1 to March 7, MYLA assisted in the issuance of 89.152 intentions to seek asylum. 22 field clerks were engaged for the preparation of the documents.

After the EU-Turkey Summit on the refugee crisis held on March 7, the borders along the so-called Balkan route were closed. On the southern border with Greece, on March 14, approximately 2,000 to 3,000 refugees attempted to enter Macedonian territory near the village of Moin, but were intercepted by the Macedonian police and returned to Greece. This attempt ended tragically for three persons who lost their lives in an attempt to cross a river in order to reach Macedonia. This incident was followed by other occasional tensions on both borders. As a result of the closure of the borders, the number of refugees who irregularly arrived and transited through the country, mostly with the help of smugglers, had increased.

A total of thirteen MYLA lawyers and ten translators from Arabic were present at the southern and northern border in the transit centres "Vinojug" and "Tabanovce" and offered preliminary free legal aid and information for a total of 99.113 refugees.

Moreover, 1.373 asylum seekers, refugees and persons under subsidiary protection received legal advice, information and assistance in the asylum procedure, acquiring social and health assistance, birth registration, paternity recognition, obtaining travel and identity documents, residence permits and acquisition of Macedonian citizenship in front of domestic and foreign competent authorities. In addition MYLA's lawyers provided legal assistance at the Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers and at the MYLA's office in the Municipality of Shuto Orizari. As a result, seven asylum seekers were granted the right to asylum in 2016 (one person was granted refugee status and six subsidiary protection), while the Administrative and Higher Administrative Courts brought a total of 35 verdicts in favour of the persons who were represented by MYLA.

MYLA provided legal assistance through a free telephone line available 24/7. In 2016, there were a total of 50 calls, most of which were from refugees, and several of the activists and aid workers who were with the refugees during the call. The information provided was related to the submission of an asylum application in a police station, referrals to field lawyers in the case of unofficial returns from Serbia and lost registration documents, as well as referral to the Red Cross regarding cases of family separation.

MYLA's lawyers also provided legal assistance to refugees and migrants in the Reception Center for Foreigners in Skopje during the course of 2016. Over the year, they conducted 37 visits to the Reception Center for Foreigners, where they informed and advised a total of 68 detained persons regarding the right to asylum.

STATELESSNESS

Statelessness and lack of registered civil status and personal documents constitute a serious problem in the enjoyment of basic social and economic rights for a large number of people living in Macedonia. For most of these persons, poverty, marginalization and discrimination are a "standard" part of everyday life. Children without citizenship who are growing up with the belief that basic rights are a luxury that most children receive, but not them.

MYLA continued to provide legal assistance to stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness, with a focus on persons who have not registered their birth and personal name at the Office for Management of Register of Births, Marriages and Deaths at the Ministry of Justice. During 2016, with MYLA's assistance, 41 children and 11 other persons registered their birth and personal names.

A total of 90 people received legal aid when registering their civil status or documentation.

In 2016, MYLA cooperated with the Department for Foreigners and Readmission and the Citizenship Department on all issues related to the interpretation of relevant provisions from the Law on Foreigners and the Law on Citizenship. During the same period, MYLA provided legal assistance to 290 people with undetermined nationality and unregulated citizenship. As a result, 92 people received Macedonian citizenship. MYLA offered legal and financial support with the extension of residence permit to 47 people of undetermined nationality in their quest for acquiring citizenship.

"Every day we celebrate human rights when we show someone that they have a right that protects them, when we support them in accomplishing it, and when we witness how they enjoy this right. For me, Human Rights Day is a day when I commemorate the joy that I have a chance through MYLA's work to contribute to greater respect for human rights"

Martina Martinova, a young lawyer at MYLA

DISCRIMINATION AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

In 2016, MYLA observed a significant number of discrimination cases based on ethnicity, gender, political (none) affiliation and against members of the LGBTI community. Usual policies, practices and cases that violate human rights, that have been present in Macedonian society for many years, still continued. Particularly worrying, in addition to discrimination, were violations of the following human rights and freedoms: the right to leave the country, freedom of movement, rights to pension and disability insurance, as well as labour rights. MYLA provided legal assistance and representation for 421 victims of discrimination and other human rights violations.

The discrimination of the Roma ethnic community at the border crossing points in the Republic of Macedonia continued in 2016, too. In a court procedure conducted within MYLA, the Court of Appeal in Bitola issued a judgment determining discrimination at the border crossing point. The Court referred to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia under which all citizens are equal in their freedoms and rights, as well as the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination. This is the second effective verdict supported by the MYLA which determines discrimination and restriction of the right to free movement of persons of Roma nationality.

Pregnant women are also victims of discriminatory treatment in labour relations. In one of the cases represented by MYLA, the Basic Court Skopje II in Skopje reached a verdict establishing discrimination and unequal treatment based on personal status, family and marital status, i.e. pregnancy with termination of employment. This court decision is particularly important because for the first time in the Republic of Macedonia, discrimination was determined on the basis of pregnancy.

Moreover, this verdict is critical because as a result, several women approached MYLA and reported that after informing their employer about their condition, their employment contract was not extended.

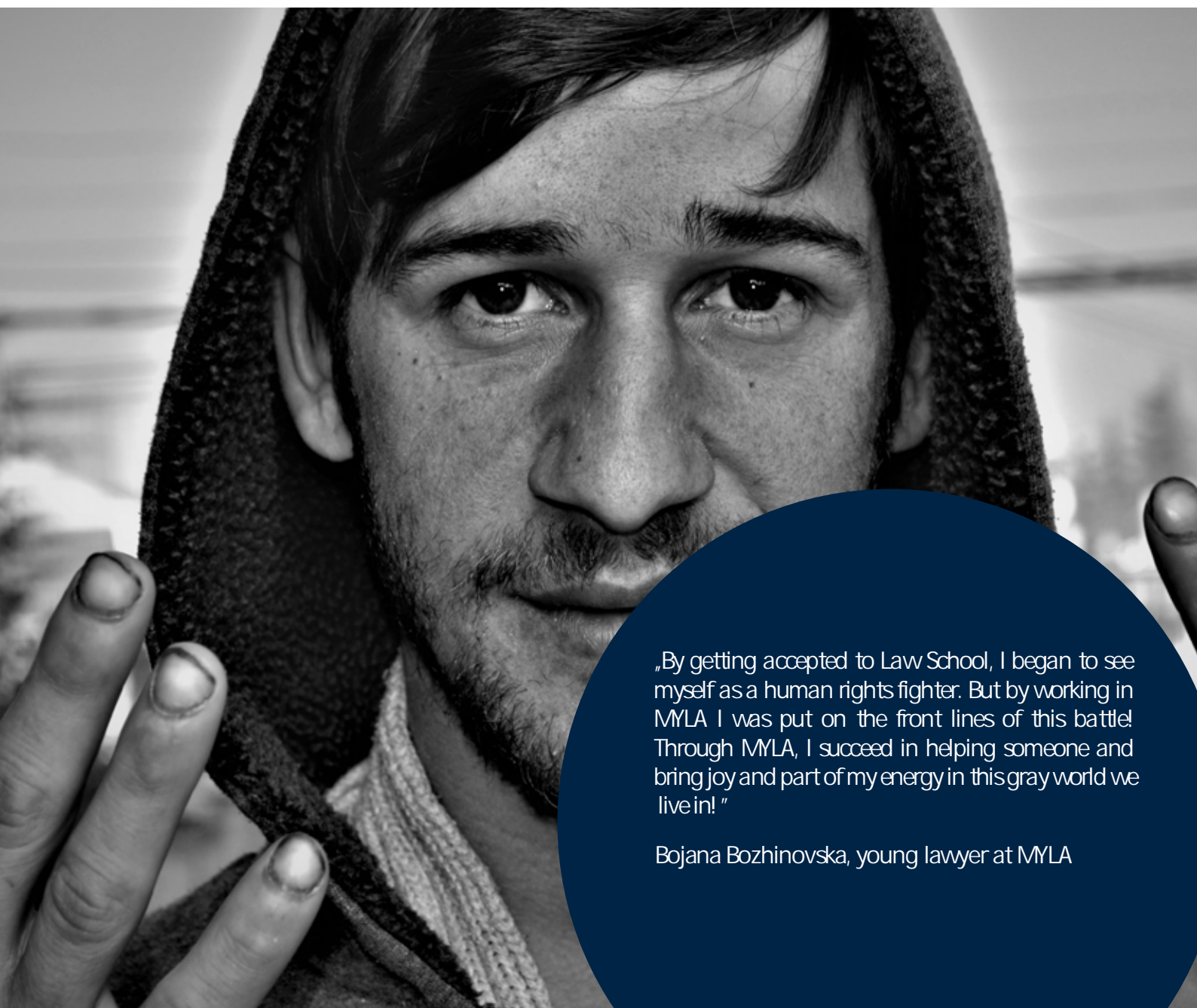
Another frequent occurrence in Macedonia is the psychological harassment at the workplace i.e. mobbing, which is very rarely reported. In a case represented by a MYLA attorney, the Basic Court Skopje II in Skopje reached a verdict establishing psychological harassment of the plaintiff that caused mental pain, fear, humiliation, violation of dignity, integrity, honour and reputation of the plaintiff with the ultimate goal of leaving the workplace.

In 2016, MYLA responded to a total of 197 calls made to the free telephone line intended for reporting human rights and freedoms violations. The most common legal issues were related to forced execution of bank loans, right to a trial within a reasonable time, problems in access to social protection rights, property legal issues, family and status issues, employment and labour rights, as well as discrimination based on political affiliation.

MYLA provided legal advice to a total of 110 persons given by 14 lawyers hired in 2016. The most common legal issues for which the lawyers provided free legal advice were access to disability pension, protection of property, problems with the execution of bank loans, discrimination on the basis of political affiliation, social protection, protection of persons with psychological or physical disability, police misconduct, property legal issues and debts, labour disputes, etc.

During October 2016, MYLA held "Open Days" with the citizens of Ohrid and Struga under the slogan "Get to Know Your Rights". Around 300 residents of the municipalities were given promotional leaflets informing them about their basic human rights, and at the same time they learned of the free telephone line where they can report rights violations. More than 60 people had the opportunity to talk to one of the present lawyers.

In November 2016, MYLA participated in a two-day Program for psychological support of parents of children with special needs, an event organized by the Resource Centre of parents of children with special needs. MYLA's lawyer present at the event provided legal assistance to 20 parents who needed counseling or more detailed consideration of the legal challenges they face.



„By getting accepted to Law School, I began to see myself as a human rights fighter. But by working in MYLA I was put on the front lines of this battle! Through MYLA, I succeed in helping someone and bring joy and part of my energy in this gray world we live in! ”

Bojana Bozhinovska, young lawyer at MYLA

LEGAL EDUCATION



"I am happy (and lucky) that I was one of the chosen young lawyers in the Internship Program. In a very short time, I learned a lot and was introduced to new topics and ways of thinking. I felt like I was receiving the knowledge that I lack, the knowledge that will prepare me for future challenges. The cooperation, discussions with colleagues and the advices I was given are very important to me."

– Gorica Nadjinska, intern at the Ombudsman and in a law firm through the MYLA Internship Program

In 2016, MYLA organized and held a total of **59** trainings through which about **1 0 0 1** young lawyers and attorneys, representatives of government institutions, the judiciary and civil society received legal education in the scope of MYLA's work. Additionally, MYLA provided internships for **1 4 7** young lawyers in 34 institutions, courts and law offices in 11 cities throughout Macedonia.

At the beginning of 2016, MYLA established a web site aimed at young lawyers and attorneys, which includes an electronic library and courses. The E-library contains basic data on the strategic subjects that the MYLA guides, as well as legal literature relevant to young lawyers. The courses contain sound recordings of several trainings and presentations prepared and conducted by experts engaged to conduct trainings on various human rights topics, the European Convention on Human Rights, the application admissibility criteria and the victim status for the purpose of submitting an application before the European Court of Human Rights. The site is available at <http://e-learning.myla.org.mk/>.

In the field of asylum and migration, in 2016, MYLA held 20 trainings for about 364 young lawyers and attorneys, representatives of government institutions, the judiciary and civil society.

As a consequence of the refugee crisis, representatives of institutions and civil society organizations were actively present in the field in 2016, due to which MYLA provided adequate training for 202 field workers. The trainings covered standard operating procedures for dealing with unaccompanied children - foreigners and vulnerable categories of foreigners, as well as the gender aspects of providing protection to refugees and migrants. Additionally, MYLA organized two trainings and one study visit to the Netherlands for 53 lawyers, attorneys, judges and counsellors from the Sector for Asylum at the Ministry of Interior working in this area.

As part of the educational activities, MYLA trained 50 border police representatives on how to use the FRONTEX Manual for the respect of fundamental rights and about acting upon the return of persons from third countries in accordance with the EU Directive 2008/115. MYLA also provided education for law students, young lawyers and attorneys interested in this field and has managed to introduce 60 of them into the refugee law and asylum.

In the field of statelessness, in 2016, MYLA held 10 trainings for 23 representatives of Roma Information Centres and CSOs, as well as 3 lectures for 85 high school students and law students.

As an active supporter of the work of Roma Information Centres throughout the country and non-governmental organizations supporting stateless persons, MYLA provided 13 trainings for 23 representatives referring to the procedures for additional registration of birth and personal name, residence and naturalization regulation. In addition, MYLA delivered lectures to 85 high school and law students to introduce them to the issue of statelessness of children in Macedonia.

In the field of discrimination, in 2016 MYLA held 9 trainings and counseling of 166 representatives of marginalized communities, organizations and media, and one training for 25 representatives of the Macedonian Police Union Women's Section.

During 2016, MYLA organized 7 workshops on discrimination, how to recognize it, where and when to seek protection and which laws regulate discrimination in Macedonia. The workshops trained representatives of the Roma community, persons with disabilities, LGBTI persons, CSO and media. Additionally, MYLA organized one counseling on the topic "Legal protection of female workers - victims of discrimination during pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood", on which 29 lawyers, attorneys and representatives from civil society attended.

As part of the established cooperation with Macedonian Police Union, MYLA conducted training for the members of the Women's Section of Macedonian Police Union on recognizing discrimination and how to protect individuals from discriminatory treatment, with a special focus on gender and status based discrimination. At one networking event organized in cooperation with Special Primary School Maca Ovcarova in Veles, 18 representatives from local CSOs working on issues related to disability and support of families and parents of children with disabilities, had the opportunity to be introduced to the legal procedure and principles for the prevention of discrimination based on disability.

In the field of other human rights, during 2016 MYLA conducted 15 trainings, workshops and counsellings for 309 young lawyers, attorneys, representatives of institutions and organizations.

Throughout 2016, MYLA focused on supporting young lawyers and attorneys through legal education in the field of human rights, with a distinct focus on the European Convention on Human Rights, public speaking and team work. The trainings were delivered to 172 young lawyers and attorneys. MYLA organized counseling with 66 participating attorneys, representatives of civil society organizations and citizens, in order to provide a forum for discussion and debate, as well as legal information on current issues and problems.

The chosen topics focused on legal remedies in cases of: exercising social protection rights; citizens' obligation to pay compensation even though they do not use municipal heating; freedom of expression, particularly hate speech. One of the topics that MYLA covered with the training focused on the correct ways to inform the public about human rights violations, with 26 participants from 15 CSOs from different regions in Macedonia present. The training provided the participants with the knowledge and skills necessary for proper reporting to the public about individual cases of human rights violations which they have identified within their work and activities, as well as to contribute to the strengthening of the role of civil society organizations in monitoring the protection of human rights in local communities.

Additionally, in 2016 MYLA focused on topics related to women's access to justice, and in cooperation with association for equal opportunities "Equal Access", MYLA organized 4 trainings for 45 attorneys, representatives of institutions and organizations in which they had the opportunity to increase their knowledge about gender base violence and women's access to justice through the use of the available legal possibilities.



"During the internship at MYLA, I learned a lot about different challenges in the protection of the human rights and the access to justice. This experience enlightened me to what it means to provide free legal aid to people – without MYLA, people will be forgotten in their struggle for their human and social rights"

- Judith Bauder from Austria, member of ELSA and intern in MYLA

RESEARCH, POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Through its activities and initiatives in 2016, Macedonian Young Lawyers Association contributed in the improvement of the institutional policies and practices aiming at strengthening the rule of law and the protection of human rights.

MYLA PARTICIPATES IN THE WORKING GROUP FOR PREPARING THE TEXT OF THE NEW LAW ON FREE LEGAL AID

In the first half of October 2016, the Ministry of Justice established a working group to work on the text of the new Law on Free Legal Aid. Proposals of the provisions were made by Agris Batalauskis, expert from Latvia. The expert had a series of meetings with MYLA, which led to the new proposals.

As a member of the working group, MYLA emphasizes the need for adopting a completely new law, due to the high number of legal aid providers in Macedonia, the need for establishing clear procedures and clear and exact deadlines, establishing a functional system in which each of the concerned parties will accurately know its role, as well as the need to provide legal assistance to anyone who needs it, and not focusing only on those who do not have the opportunity to afford it. Members of this working group, besides the representatives from the legal sectors of the Ministry, are judges from Primary Court Skopje 2 Skopje, as well as representatives from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Inter-municipal Centre for Social Work of the City of Skopje, the Ministry of Interior and the Macedonian Bar Association.



MYLA PARTICIPATES IN WORKING GROUP FOR PREPARING THE PROPOSAL TEXT OF THE LAW FOR PREVENTION AND PROTECTION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

Upon invitation of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, MYLA has been participating in the working group for the draft text of the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination as from September 2016

MYLA initially submitted amendments to the law in accordance with the previous experience on practicing the law, and then through a representative MYLA actively participated in drafting the draft text of the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination. The proposals that MYLA made to amend this Law reflect the long experience in working and implementation of the law in practice, as well as conducting numerous procedures before the competent authorities. For MYLA, the driving motivation is that proper protection of the victims of discrimination is imperative in building a democratic society.

MYLA IS PART OF THE INITIATIVE FOR AMENDMENTS TO THE LAW ON ASYLUM AND TEMPORARY PROTECTION

In April 2016, the Parliament of Republic of Macedonia adopted the amendments to the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection. MYLA finds that these amendments significantly reduce the protection that Macedonia provides to asylum seekers and deprives them of human rights guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights and United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees. In May 2016, MYLA prepared a legal opinion containing an elaborate analysis of the problems arising from each amended Article of the Law as a result of the concern that MYLA had of the possibility of violation of the rights of asylum seekers and refugees.

In the Opinion, MYLA emphasized that the proposed amendments significantly hinder the protection of asylum seekers in the procedure for recognition of the right to asylum and that they violate the EU legislation, ECtHR and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Among other things, this amendment is contrary to other Articles of the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection. The Opinion was published on MYLA's website and submitted to partner organizations and the Sector for Asylum – Ministry of Interior, Secretariat for European Affairs and the Legislative and Legal Commission of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia.

The legal opinion was also shared with the Ombudsman of the Republic of Macedonia, and served as a base for the Ombudsman on June 20 to submit an Initiative for amendments to the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection to the Government of Republic of Macedonia. The proposal was prepared by MYLA and the Ombudsman, and supported by numerous partner organizations.

MYLA'S SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVE TO REPEAL THE CONTESTED PROVISION IMPLEMENTED UNCONSTITUTIONALLY ON 1500 PERSONS, TO THEIR DAMAGE

On January 27 2016, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), repealed the provision of the Rulebook for social and permanent financial assistance, by which incomes accepted through fast money transfer services (Western Union, MoneyGram) is calculated as an asset of the persons who use social or permanent financial assistance during the official determination of the assets of the person. With this, fast money transfer is no longer one of the conditions for determination the state of the income, property and property rights while exercising the right to social welfare assistance or permanent financial assistance.

This provision entry into force in January 2015 and was used to cease the right to social or permanent financial assistance to 1500 people for receiving funds through the fast money transfer service in 2014. Implementation of this provision in this way is a retroactive implementation of an unfavourable regulation, something that is explicitly prohibited by the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia.

MYLA in cooperation with partner organization helped 50 people to file complaint against such decisions in which the retroactive implementation of the regulation was highlighted, and as a consequence MLSP rejected the complaints without expressing the allegations. MYLA started administrative disputes in these cases, and in 16 the Administrative Court passed judgments in favour of the plaintiffs. As a result of the seriousness of the retroactive implementation of the law, MYLA prepared and submitted a legal opinion to MLSP and the Ombudsman.

MYLA PARTICIPATED IN PREPARATIONS OF STANDARD OPERATIVE PROCEDURES

In March and April 2016, the process for adopting the Standard Operative Procedures for dealing with vulnerable categories of persons – foreigners, started with the support of MYLA.

The procedures are focused on vulnerable categories of persons and aimed to create a favourable identification and referral system in order to provide access to international protection for persons in need. SOPs were adopted by the Government of the republic of Macedonia during the same year. to provide access to international protection for persons in need. SOPs were adopted by the Government of the republic of Macedonia during the same year.

MYLA also participated in the process of developing the Standard Operative Procedures for prevention and response to sexual and gender based violence in emergency, crisis and disaster response, within the institutional leadership of the Ministry of Health. MYLA was part of the working group on justice and protection.

AWARD FOR PROFESSIONAL REPORTING ABOUT THE CONDITION OF THE REFUGEES DURING THE MIXED MIGRATION MOVEMENTS IN 2015 AND THE EXHIBITION ON THE TOPIC "THE 2015 REFUGEE CRISIS"

In order to support objective and free media coverage and to raise awareness about the situation of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Macedonia, the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association in cooperation with the High Commissioner for refugees UNHCR in Skopje and the Journalist Association of Macedonia, organized an event - "Award for professional reporting for the situation of the refugees during the mixed migration movements in 2015 in Macedonia".

The award ceremony was held on World Refugee Day, June 20th, as part of a joint event with partner organizations, institutions, refugees and other guests.

To support photo-reporters who worked tirelessly and allowed us to see directly at the heart of the crisis, MYLA together with UNHCR office in Skopje and the Journalists Association of Macedonia organized an award and exhibition on the topic "The refugee wave in Macedonia". The exhibition was held on November 18, with 53 exhibited photographs.

MYLA PARTICIPATES IN INITIATIVES FOR THE RATIFICATION OF THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION

MYLA actively participated in initiatives to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). MYLA in partnership with Association Equal Opportunities Equal Access, addressed the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy for support, and organized an event that discussed the importance of ratifying the Convention, which was attended by all relevant actors.

MYLA AND PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS REACT TO EUROPE'S RESTRICTIVE POLICY AS A RESPONSE TO THE REFUGEE CRISIS

European countries had adopted a series of discriminatory and harmful measures intending to repel marginalized people in their intention to seek protection. MYLA and its partner organizations through an open letter had condemned the introduction of such measures: "We call on all European governments to undertake measures aimed towards fulfilling their obligations under the international law and the humanitarian needs of the people on the move."

Ahead of the meeting of the European Council which took place on June 28 and 29, MYLA and more than 100 CSO's around Europe, warned that the plan on migrations will reduce the credibility and authority of the European Union and its member countries when it comes to human rights protection.

MYLA'S LEGAL OPINION ON THE CONSTITUTIONALITY AND THE LAWFULNESS OF REFUSING PEOPLE THEIR RIGHT TO LEAVE THE TERRITORY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Aiming towards changing the practice of the institutions concerning marginalized groups, MYLA has prepared a legal opinion on the constitutionality and the lawfulness of refusing people their right to leave the territory of the Republic of Macedonia. The legal opinion was delivered to the institutions who unlawfully denied Macedonian citizens to leave the country calling upon the suspicion of abusing the visa free regime between the Republic of Macedonia and the Schengen zone countries. This legal opinion is available on MYLA's web site.

MYLA HAD A SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVE FOR OVERCOMING STATELESSNESS AMONG CHILDREN

MYLA organized a meeting on the "Challenges in the integration of refugees and statelessness persons in Macedonia" with a focus on the issue of statelessness among children. Representatives of domestic and international organizations, as well as representatives of state institutions like the Ministry of Interior and the Ombudsman participated. As a result of the meeting, additional birth registrations of five births were conducted in the two weeks following the meeting.

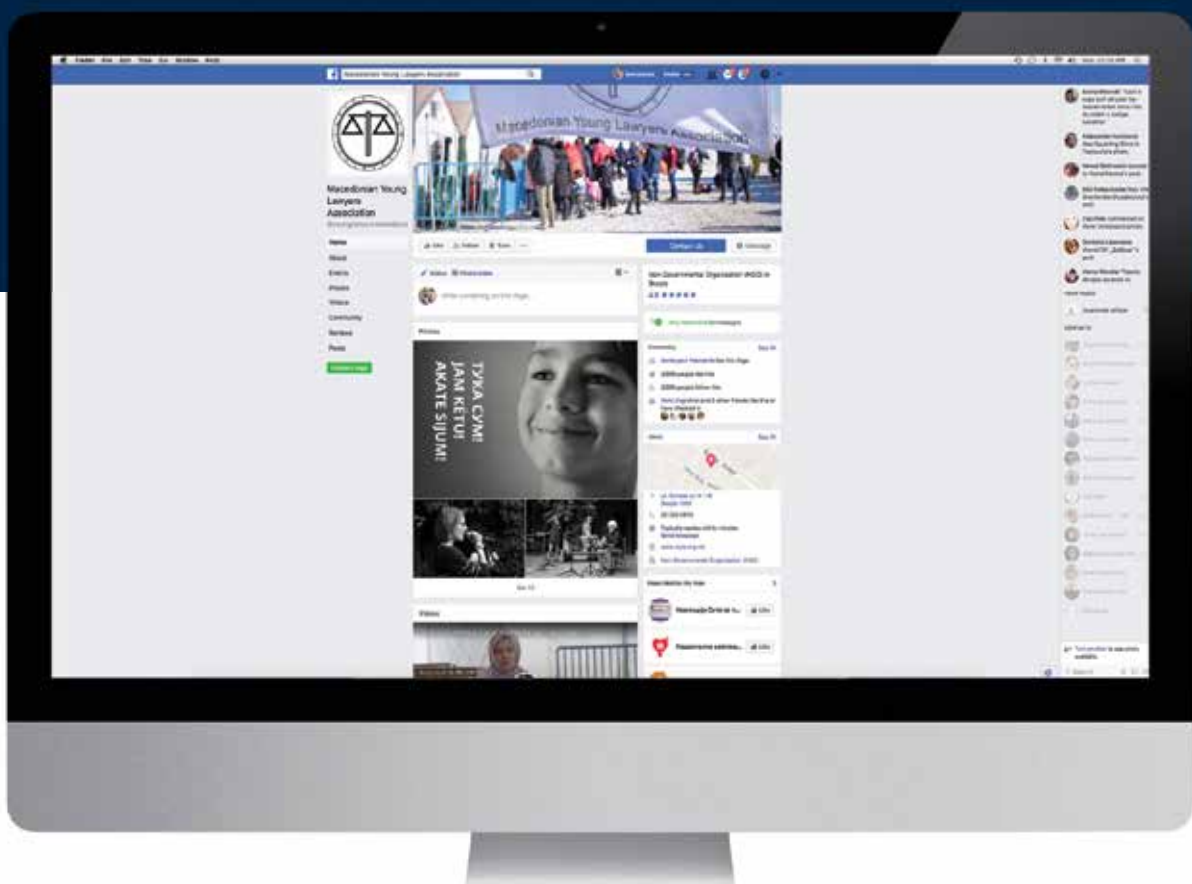


STRENGTHENING OF PUBLIC AWARENESS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Besides conducting activities that have direct effect on stakeholders and beneficiaries, MYLA implemented communication activities aiming to strengthen the public awareness and the awareness of the target audiences on the challenges that refugees, migrants, asylum seekers and stateless persons, among others face.

In an effort to bring these issues closer to the public, MYLA conducted two video campaigns and produced articles and photo essays about these persons' stories. In addition to these distinct campaigns, MYLA constantly informs relevant audiences through social networks about the activities of the organization and the topics of interest for law students and young lawyers.

By prompt publishing of relevant information, MYLA's Facebook page is a place where young lawyers and other stakeholders receive information and upgrade their knowledge on the promotion and protection of human rights, improving legal education and the legal profession, the rule of law principle and other relevant topics. Some of the campaigns led by MYLA in 2016 are listed below.



Her struggle is my struggle! Let us bring back the dignity of these women!

This video shows the stories of migrant/refugee women who stay in the transit centres in Macedonia. Their story is filled with dread and despair, but with hope and vision for better future as well.



Let's do everything to eradicate statelessness!

These people are not invisible. They live together with us! The purpose of this video is to show and bring closer to the general public the situation about statelessness as an issue with serious consequences on the lives of hundreds of people in Macedonia as well as more than 10 million people around the world. Children are the most affected by this problem.



Macedonian Young Lawyers Association continued its activities and in 2016 published 18 analyses, reports and other publications. All of them are available on MYLA's web site: www.myla.org.mk

„Closed borders“ – Programme report on the influence that the act of closing the borders has over the refugees and migrants, with special focus on women and children

The report represents an analysis of the issues that migrants and refugees, especially women and children face while transiting or residing in Macedonia and Serbia while crossing the Balkan route, after the border points were closed. This document analyses the situation with regards to providing protection to these categories of people, and contains recommendations on how the state should protect their safety, dignity and human rights.



„Asylum seekers and migrants' rights“ - Comments and collection of judgements from the European Court of Human Rights

This collection is a result of the need for those working in the field to have a book in Macedonian that explains the most important judgments of the ECtHR concerning the protection of the rights of asylum seekers and migrants in the simplest terms. Besides translation of the most important judgments, this book incorporates comments and analyses of the ECtHR case law in this field.



„Availability and access to free legal aid for asylum seekers in the Republic of Macedonia“ – Analysis

The analysis is a result of the need to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the system for providing free legal aid in the asylum procedures. The purpose of the analysis is to provide a basis for further improvement of the law and practice of the institutions involved in the system for the provision of free legal aid.



„Gender aspects of providing protection to refugees and migrants in the Republic of Macedonia” – Manual

The main goal of this manual is to provide women understand the basic concepts of gender equality, non-discrimination and treatment of migrant/refugee women. Its purpose is to be used as a paper for raising awareness and sensitization of people who provide these women with reception and initial assistance, as well as for those who provide similar services to migrant/refugee women.



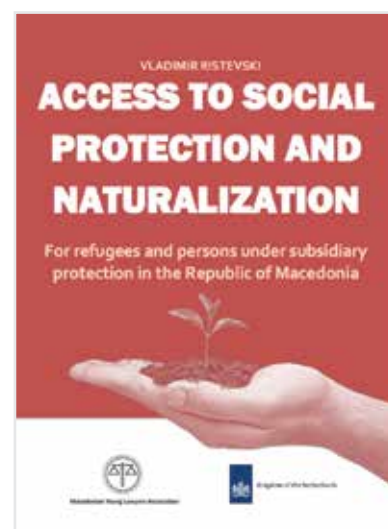
„Perspectives for establishing border monitoring in Macedonia” – Discussion paper

This discussion paper analyses border monitoring which represents a systematic activity in relation to asylum and migration. The purpose of border monitoring is to follow and document the implementation of domestic procedures in dealing with migrants and potential asylum seekers as well as the level of protection of their human rights during these procedures.



„Access to social protection and naturalization of refugees and persons under subsidiary protection in the Republic of Macedonia” – Discussion paper

This discussion paper analyses the relevant legal framework on the rights that are granted to refugees and persons under subsidiary protection in the process of naturalization, especially the right to social protection and naturalization. The document identifies the biggest challenges in the access to these rights and includes recommendations for overcoming these problems.



Regional research on statelessness

The goal of this research is to comprehensively explain the situation concerning statelessness in the countries in the Western Balkans the reasons why certain people face this problem, the everyday difficulties when being stateless, the legal framework related to this problem in every country as well as the protection that the state provides to stateless people, international instruments ratified by the countries as well as the measures every CSO is undertaking in their country to raise the awareness and to eradicate statelessness.



„Our invisible children – Statelessness among children in Macedonia” – Informative brochure

This informative brochure provides information on the importance of statelessness, what causes it, the extent of statelessness among children, as well as the key measures that need to be undertaken to eradicate statelessness in Macedonia. The brochure includes photographs of statelessness children in Macedonia.



Analysis of strategic litigation cases

The analysis contains an overview of discrimination cases supported by Macedonian Young Lawyers Association. The analysis includes conclusions and recommendations which could help those who have been, are or might become victims of discrimination, and encourage them to use all possible legal means which could protect their rights.



„You have rights! Say no to discrimination“ – Manual

This manual contains information on protection against discrimination established by various laws in the Republic of Macedonia. The manual clarifies discrimination, how to recognize it, when and where to seek protection and which legal means can be used in discrimination cases. The purpose of the manual is to contribute to a discrimination free society and to encourage citizens to seek protection of their rights.



Report on the views, needs and challenges of young lawyers in Macedonia

The report on the views, needs and challenges of young lawyers in Macedonia identifies and analyses the problems and challenges that law students and graduated lawyers encounter throughout their professional careers. The report points out the issues and challenges young lawyers face during their studies, apprenticeships, taking the bar exam and entering any of the legal professions.



Annual report on the efficiency of the legal protection of human rights in the Republic of Macedonia (September 2014 – December 2015)

The main purpose of the report is to present the human rights violations detected in the period between September 2014 and December 2015. Besides documenting human rights violations, the report analyses the efficiency of legal remedies, especially the judicial protection in the detected cases. The report aims to contribute towards creating an insight in the situation with human rights in Macedonia.



Human rights index – second edition

The Human rights index (HRI) is a tool developed by MYLA with a purpose to follow the development and protection of human rights in Macedonia on an annual level. HRI is based on a diverse database of information and is designed to reflect the current situation of human rights protection in Macedonia.



„Provision of information, advice and legal aid in the Republic of Macedonia” – Report for Macedonia (2016)

The report answers the question of efficiency of the system established by law for providing information and free legal aid in Macedonia and if it follows citizens’ needs. The report includes analysis of the legal, administrative and institutional framework of the system for providing the citizens with information, advices and active help, and contains recommendations for its further improvement.



„Access to justice for women” – Analysis

The purpose of this analysis is to identify the state of access to justice for women with special focus on women victims of gender based violence. The analysis contributes to the identification of the need for amendments of relevant laws and practices allowing access to justice for victims of gender based violence and adequate assistance and support to their needs based on equal opportunities.



PARTNERS

In 2016, MYLA's work was supported by our long-standing partners and associates to whom we are very grateful.



LIDERSHIP

On 14 November 2016, MYLA held the Annual Assembly where new members of the MYLA Managing Board were elected, as follows: Sofija Bojkovska, Irena Zdravkova, Bisera Mitic and Maja Atanasova, in the place of current board members Katerina Mitreska, Lazar Sandev, Ljupka Noveska Andonova and Bojan Gjurovski.

In the place of the current President of MYLA, Martina Smilevska-K'cheva, whose term ended up with this event, Zoran Drangovski who has worked in MYLA for the past six years, was elected.










Irena Zdravkova, Sofija Bojkovska, Zoran Drangovski, Bisera Mitikj and Maja Atanasova



Macedonian Young Lawyers Association

CONTACT US



-  **16** employees at MYLA's Headquarters in Skopje
-  **6** employees at MYLA's Office in Suto Orizari
-  **4** employees at the Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers in Vizbegovo
-  **10** lawyers at „Vinojug“ in Gevgelija
-  **3** lawyers at „Tabanovce“ in Kumanovo
-  **10** interpreters at „Vinojug“ and „Tabanovce“
-  **36** attorneys across the country

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