



Institutional Portfolio – Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA)

Introduction

The Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA) is a leading national organization committed to the advancement of human rights, rule of law, and democratic governance in the Republic of North Macedonia. Established in 2003, MYLA operates as a professional, independent, and non-partisan civil society organization, providing robust legal aid, strategic litigation, capacity development, and legal policy reform.

For over two decades, MYLA has served as a trusted partner to institutions, civil society, and international organizations. Our work is driven by a clear principle: **the law must serve people, ensure justice, and protect the dignity and rights of all**—especially those most excluded from the system.

Our Mission

To strengthen access to justice and uphold human rights through expert legal assistance, strategic litigation, research, and policy advocacy—with a particular focus on marginalized and vulnerable groups.

Our Vision

A just and democratic society in which the legal system functions with integrity, defends human rights, and ensures accountability, equality, and the rule of law.

Key Achievements and Systemic Impact

- **Over 28,600 individuals** provided with high-quality, free legal aid and legal representation.
- **130 strategic legal cases**, including **35 before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR)**—contributing to critical human rights jurisprudence and systemic change.
- **163 legal and policy research publications** and **over 40 targeted legal reforms**, strengthening the rule of law and institutional performance.
- **6,200+ legal professionals, civil society actors, and public servants** trained in core rule-of-law topics, including anti-discrimination, asylum law, and access to justice.
- **130,000 people** reached through awareness campaigns, legal help desks, and community outreach—empowering citizens to know and claim their rights.

Strategic Areas of Engagement

1. Legal Aid and Strategic Litigation

MYLA is a national leader in delivering structured and accountable legal aid, in line with international human rights obligations and national law. We represent individuals in high-impact cases across civil, administrative, and constitutional courts. Landmark cases initiated by MYLA include the first rulings on racial discrimination, workplace harassment, and environmental protection. Our cases before the ECtHR have led to the revision of domestic laws and the adoption of new institutional procedures.

2. Education and Capacity Building

Our work strengthens the legal community and institutions. More than 500 young lawyers have participated in our legal internship program, while over 540 professional trainings have enhanced the knowledge and skills of over 6,000 participants, including judges, attorneys, civil servants, and NGO professionals. Our Help Desk provides daily expert support to legal practitioners and civil society organizations nationwide.

3. Legal Research and Policy Reform

We produce rigorous, evidence-based research to guide legislative reform and policy development. Our work has resulted in significant institutional improvements in areas such as immigration detention, environmental justice, and access to legal identity, and child protection. MYLA is recognized as a reference point for data-driven, actionable legal analysis in North Macedonia.

4. Civil Society Strengthening and Strategic Partnerships

MYLA supports civil society actors through legal guidance, policy support, advocacy mentoring, and strategic litigation collaboration. We co-develop public campaigns, contribute to coalition-building, and offer legal instruments to empower human rights defenders, environmental activists, and community-based organizations.

Thematic Priority Areas

- **Asylum and Migration:** Holistic support including mobile legal aid teams, litigation, and capacity-building for institutions.
- **Statelessness:** Pioneering efforts in legal documentation, strategic casework, and legislative reform for stateless persons.
- **Anti-Discrimination:** Leadership in policy advocacy, legal protection, and systemic monitoring.
- **Environmental Justice:** Strategic litigation, legal protection for activists, and community-based environmental defense.
- **Children's Rights:** Direct legal representation of children and reforms for a child-sensitive justice system.
- **Trafficking in Human Beings:** Institutional engagement, field-level interventions, and survivor-centered legal assistance.
- **Access to Justice:** Monitoring of public institutions, development of alternative legal mechanisms, and legal empowerment initiatives.

Networks, Memberships, and Institutional Engagement

MYLA is an active and respected member of key regional and European networks, including:

- **European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)**
- **European Network on Statelessness (ENS)**
- **European Implementation Network (EIN)**
- **Blueprint Group for Rule of Law in the Western Balkans**
- **Western Balkans Legal Aid Network (WeBLAN)**

MYLA contributes expert input to national and regional working groups and advisory bodies, including:

- Working group for anti-discrimination legislation
- National Council on Free Legal Aid
- Reform group on judicial and bar examination frameworks
- Inter-institutional platform for child justice

We collaborate closely with the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior, and Office of the Ombudsperson, Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors, Bar Association of North Macedonia, and other national institutions.

Selected Publications and Knowledge Resources

With more than **160 published resources**, MYLA's publications are widely used by policymakers, practitioners, and international organizations. Highlights include:

- Comprehensive reports on immigration detention practices and rule-of-law standards
- Policy briefs on freedom of assembly and civic space
- Training manuals on gender equality, fair trial standards, and access to justice
- Legal toolkits for non-governmental organizations and human rights defenders

Contact Information

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