

Brussels, 30 March 2016

Re: Project - European lawyers in Lesbos

Dear President,
Dear Colleague,

I am writing to you regarding our project to send lawyers to hotspots in Greece, more particularly to Lesbos, which is currently the sole fully operational hotspot in Greece (other ones are being organised in Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos). The idea, launched by the President of the Deutscher Anwaltverein (DAV) at the Vienna European Presidents' Conference in February, is supported by the CCBE, which wants an EU initiative on this matter. The CCBE and the DAV are working together to run this project, with the involvement and assistance of the Greek Bar.

The CCBE suggests sending European lawyers to Lesbos. These lawyers would take turns for a short amount of time (between one and three weeks) over the course of a year in order to fulfil their mission:

- To observe,
- To provide information (the CCBE works in cooperation with the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative in order to develop, amongst other things, documentation for migrants),
- To give legal advice to migrants.

These lawyers will need to be trained in asylum law, to be fluent in English, and if possible, in Arabic.

In fact, the situation in the hotspots is unacceptable. According to the information we have received, the fundamental rights of persons seeking international protection are not being guaranteed. There is no access to justice, no access to a lawyer, no judicial review of the administrative procedures. Migrants are systematically held in administrative detention, without the help of an interpreter. These vulnerable persons are therefore completely unaware of their rights.

We also understand that there is a complete lack of respect for human rights during the registration process for migrants. Many obvious mistakes are made regarding nationalities, age or family status. The police immediately monitors all criteria for registration, often changing these criteria. It seems that the police are refusing to register certain nationalities which are not deemed to be eligible to receive refugee status. The police are also seemingly not registering certain single men.

Implementing our project would require a total budget of EUR 160,000. We therefore need 16 organisations (national, regional and local Bars and Law Societies as well as national organisations) to each pay EUR 10,000. Several Bars and Law Societies have already confirmed their participation in the financing of the project.

Le Président
The President

I therefore call upon your Bar/Law Society to support this initiative through a contribution of EUR 10,000.

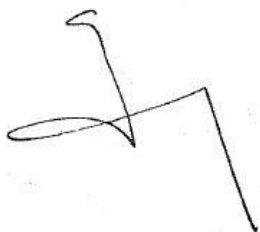
Through this concrete initiative, Bars and Law Societies would show that they can act together in the defence of the fundamental rights of vulnerable persons seeking international protection.

This project will be carried out over the course of a year. The goal is to show the European institutions, through our presence and intervention, that there is a real need for legal assistance and to convince them to release the necessary funds to ensure the continuity of the operation.

We will undoubtedly keep you informed about the implementation of the project and its monitoring. We will provide regular communication concerning the developments in Lesbos.

I would like to thank you for giving this request your full attention.

Yours sincerely,



Michel Benichou
President