

## Mission project: How to make access to legal advice easier

### What is the problem?

Across the European Union, there is a social imbalance as regards who receives legal aid and who can afford legal advice. Those with higher formal education and financial means are not only more likely to know their rights but also to be able to enforce them with the help of lawyers.

### What is the solution?

#### Law clinics on labour and social law

One way to facilitate access to legal advice is through law clinics. They not only add a practical component to legal studies but also support people who cannot afford legal advice. For example, a lorry driver who worked for a Czech company with a branch in Germany did not receive his wages for months. He could not afford a lawyer, but received free help at a law clinic and in the end received 6,000 euros in outstanding wages. Law clinics dealing with labour and social law represent an important measure to enable citizens to access legal advice in countries where legal advice on labour and social law issues is lacking.

#### Scholarships for law students working in law clinics

Students gain hands-on clinical experience using their legal skills in pursuit of the broader public interest. These scholarships are intended to foster specialisation in subjects that are particularly important from a PES perspective.

To this end, existing initiatives such as the STARS project (<http://www.lawstars.eu/>), funded by Erasmus+, and ENCLE (<https://encle.org/>) should be promoted and expanded. Besides, PES and partners may try to establish their own law clinics at universities in selected Member States and/or support existing law clinics focusing on social issues. Therefore, MEPs should advocate the setting up of scholarships for law students and endowed chairs for scholars specialising in labour and social law, dedicated to law clinics. To facilitate access to law clinics, NGOs must be identified or created that could guide those concerned in this direction.

### How does it affect Europeans?

Access to justice is a problem of inequality that social democratic MEPs should address. Democracy must be protected not only at the ballot box or by civil society. Fundamental rights must be fought for and defended, above all in court. But courts cannot usually act on their own initiative – plaintiffs must first bring a case.

### What does it cost?

The cost of law clinics is small. Some of them are already funded by Erasmus+. It would be an easy fix to use these existing structures by increasing the funding for law clinics. Also, the costs of endowed chairs are insignificant compared with the public gain.

**Would you like to have more detailed information about this policy?**

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