

ELIL Board Calls on EU to Guarantee Meaningful Access to Legal Assistance

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The Supervisory Board of European Lawyers in Lesvos (ELIL) [has published a Statement](#) expressing concern about the lack of access to legal assistance for those seeking asylum at the EU's borders and the limitations of the proposed New Pact on Asylum and Migration.

Through its work in Greece over the past year, ELIL has identified the following challenges:

- An accelerated asylum procedure, which sees people called for interview at very short notice. This effectively denies people the opportunity to consult with a lawyer before their interview.
- Recent changes to the legal procedure that make it ever more complex and increase the need for legal assistance.
- The lack of state-provided legal aid ahead of the asylum interview and the recent large-scale transfers of people from the Greek islands to the mainland.

The signatories are concerned that these challenges are not adequately addressed and are instead exacerbated by the EU's New Pact on Asylum and Migration. The Pact provides for accelerated procedures, differential treatment of people according to their nationality, restrictions on access to legal aid and the screening of new arrivals in areas that are not considered to be within the territory of the arrival country. These measures threaten to limit the ability of those seeking asylum to access legal support.

The signatories believe that the right to asylum, as set out in the 1951 Refugee Convention, can only be effectively guaranteed by providing adequate access to legal assistance to all people seeking international protection. They therefore call on the EU and member states to ensure that this principle is at the heart of all policies, practices and legislative reform in the field of asylum and migration.

European Lawyers in Lesvos (ELIL) is an NGO providing free, independent legal assistance to asylum seekers in Greece. Our teams of Greek and European asylum lawyers work together to offer support in relation to the first instance asylum interview, assist with family reunification applications and offer tailored legal support to unaccompanied minors.

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