

## ELENA NETWORK

### Who we are

The European Legal Network on Asylum (ELENA) is a forum of legal practitioners promoting the highest human rights standards for the treatment of refugees, other persons in need of or benefitting from international protection in their daily legal counselling and advocacy work.

### Our history

The ELENA Network was established in 1985 with the support of France Terre d'Asile and EKD Germany. The initiative was based on the idea that lawyers and independent legal practitioners should come together to address the common concern of protection of asylum seekers and refugees in their work across Europe. Over time the ELENA network has become known for its qualitative comparative research, information provision and its respected training courses.

### ELENA today

The ELENA network extends across most European states and involves over 500 lawyers and legal counsellors. The network is coordinated by the Secretariat of the [European Council on Refugees and Exiles](#) (ECRE) in Brussels in close consultation with the [ELENA National Coordinators](#) from 36 European countries. National coordinators of the network include legal practitioners, legal academics and legal officers in ECRE member organisations.

### *Our objectives:*

- reinforce contact between legal practitioners in different European countries to promote cooperation on individual and strategic cases in the area of asylum;
- bring national legislation, policies and practices relating to refugees in Europe in compliance with international and EU law;
- organise training on specific topics relating to refugee law for practising lawyers;
- promote the development of national networks of legal practitioners specialising in asylum law.

### *Our activities:*

#### The ELENA Index

The [Index](#) provides contact information of lawyers and organisations providing legal services and other support to refugees and asylum seekers in Europe. The document is updated on an annual basis.

#### The ELENA Courses

Following a long-standing tradition, ECRE facilitates regular ELENA training courses on topics of international and European asylum law. To date ECRE and the ELENA network have organised over 40 events attended by approximately 3,000 participants

from various backgrounds including private lawyers, counsellors, NGO experts, administration and international organisations representatives, academics, and national judges.

We organise both introductory (usually one in three years) and advanced (one per year) courses in different European countries.

*“Knowledge acquired at the course will inform my practice as a lawyer and will also enable the cross training of colleagues back home. In this aspect the materials compiled and disseminated to participants are vital. The organisation of the conference was incredibly professional and I will recommend future courses to my colleagues.”*

*A participant from the ELENA course “The use of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights in Immigration and Asylum Law”, Leiden, November 2014.*

### **The ELENA Research**

ELENA undertakes qualitative legal research or comparative information projects, coordinated by staff in the ECRE Secretariat. ELENA’s [Note on Legal Aid](#) provided an overview of recent European and domestic case law and practice on the topic of asylum applicants’ access to legal aid in Europe. Other recent and comparative reports include the ELENA Legal Note on [Ageing Out and Family Reunification](#) (2018), Case law note [on the application of the Dublin Regulation to family reunion cases](#) (2018), on [access to the territory and the asylum procedure](#) (2017) and [Information Note on Family Reunification for Beneficiaries of International Protection in Europe](#) (2016).

### **The ELENA Weekly Legal Update**

The ELENA weekly legal updates (EWLU) aim to inform asylum lawyers, decision-makers and refugee-assisting organisations of recent developments in the field of asylum law. The update covers asylum-related judgments of the European Courts and domestic case law as well as asylum legal news from across Europe. Relevant training courses, calls for papers and other important announcements are also advertised. The [subscription](#) to this newsletter is free and available on ECRE’s website.

### **The Information Exchange and Litigation Support**

The sharing of information or requests for litigation support is currently moderated through a closed online ELENA Forum. Legal practitioners pursuing strategic litigation in the countries covered by ELENA may join the Forum or circulate their queries through ECRE Secretariat or domestic ELENA coordinators.

*Please contact Julia Zelvenska (JZelvenska@ecre.org), the ELENA coordinator at ECRE Secretariat, or your [national coordinator](#) should you have a legal query or need more information on the ELENA network.*