Legal assistance and representation - Finland

Overview

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Relevant EU legislation

Finland is bound by the recast Asylum Procedures Directive, the recast Reception Conditions Directive and the Dublin III Regulation and has transposed their provisions through the Aliens Act (301/2004), Act on the Treatment of Aliens in Detention and on Detention Unit (116/2002), the Act on the Reception of Persons Applying for International Protection and on the Identification of and Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings and the Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers (1386/2010).

National legislation

Finland transposed the recast Asylum Procedures Directive, the recast Reception Conditions Directive by Aliens Act (301/2004) Act on the Treatment of Aliens in Detention and on Detention Unit (116/2002), the Act on the Reception of Persons Applying for International Protection and on the Identification of and Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings. The Legal Aid Act (257/2002), the Act on Licensed Legal Aid Lawyers (715/2011) and the Law on the Legal Services Agency 1133/2023 relevant and applicable for legal assistance and representation in the international protection procedure.

Competent authority and stakeholders

Area	National authority/stakeholder

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Provision of legal and procedural information on the applicant's rights and obligations	Finnish Immigration Service, police/Border Guard Legal aid offices Finnish Refugee Advice Centre
Legal assistance at first instance determination	Legal aid offices Finnish Refugee Advice Centre
Legal counselling provided by civil society organisations or other organisations	Legal aid offices Finnish Refugee Advice Centre
Legal assistance at second instance determination	Legal aid offices
Legal assistance for other related procedures	Legal aid offices

Access to legal assistance and representation

Provision of information on legal assistance and representation

The Finnish Immigration Service provides information on legal assistance in a video translated into multiple languages. For detailed information on the procedure to obtain legal assistance, applicants are requested to refer the questions to a reception officer in the reception centre where they are accommodated. The Finnish Immigration Service offers information on its dedicated page *Legal advice*.

The police and Border Guard are responsible for providing this information in writing at the registration and lodging stage. If necessary, they also deliver the information orally to ensure understanding.

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Section 15 of Act on the Reception of Persons Applying for International Protection and on the Identification of and Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings stipulates that the reception centre provides the applicant with information on legal aid. As such, the contact with the lawyer is made while the applicant is accommodated in the reception center.

In detention, the applicant has the right to receive information on rights and obligations, including on legal aid. Pursuant to Section 123 of the Aliens Act, when deciding on detention, the person detained or his or her legal representative shall be notified in writing immediately, in a language that he or she understands, of the grounds for detention and shall be given information about the processing of the matter on which the detention is based and of the possibility of obtaining legal aid. The Act on the Treatment of Aliens Placed in Detention and Detention Units states that detainees have access to legal aid.

Pursuant to Section 8 (2) of the Aliens Act, the applicant has the right to use a lawyer or an agent in the proceedings. This is different from the right to legal aid which can be provided pursuant to Section 9 of the Aliens Act under the conditions of the Legal Aid Act (257/2002).

Access to premises

Sections 6 and 6a of the Act on the Treatment of Aliens Placed in Detention and Detention Units (116/2002), Section 6 provides the right to receive visits and communicate with lawyers and legal representatives while in detention. National and international organisations can visit detention centers provided that the detention unit allows it and they respect the rules of the detention unit. In order to ensure compliance with the procedure for expulsion under the Aliens Act, the *'Non-Discrimination Ombudsman and the official of the Office of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman appointed by him or her have the right to visit the detention unit and discuss confidentially with detained aliens'.*

Requirements: Means test and merits test

Pursuant to Section 8 (2) of the Aliens Act, the applicant has the right to use a lawyer or an agent in the proceedings.

This right is different from the right to legal aid which can be provided pursuant to Section 9 of the Aliens Act under the conditions of the Legal Aid Act

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(257/2002).

Section 9 (3) of the Aliens Act provides that, for appeals, the court may grant legal aid to an applicant without requiring the conduct of a means test. In such cases, the lawyer's fee must be paid from state funds as provided for in the Legal Aid Act.

Legal aid for the administrative procedure or appeal may be granted on the basis of the general rules for legal aid, which provides for a means test. The means test is applied by taking into account the applicant’s income, expenditures, and maintenance liability, that is means of subsistence. In order to determine the means of subsistence, the applicant must submit receipts, and other relevant documents, for himself and also for family members.

The limits are based on a government decree and the Legal Aid Office page provides the possibility to make a make a preliminary calculation of legal aid in the electronic service.

Pursuant to Section 12 of the Legal Aid Act, there is a legal aid fee that can be collected by the Legal Aid Office when being granted legal aid or when submitting an appeal/request for review of a decision on legal aid pursuant to Section 11 (2) and 24 of the Legal Aid Act. The Government determines the fess by decree. However, for minor legal advice there is no fee charged, and the Government Decree may include other exemptions from the means test.

Limitations to legal aid are provided under Section 7 of the Legal Aid Act, which stipulates that legal aid can not be granted when: i) the matter is of minor significance to the applicant; ii) the benefit is clearly less than the cost of legal aid, iii) continuing the case would result into an abuse of justice; or iv) the matter is based on a transferred right and the authorities have a strong reason to assume that the transfer has taken place in order to obtain legal aid.

Modalities to submit a request for legal aid

According to Section 13(1) of the Legal Aid Act, legal aid can be granted starting from the date of the application or also retroactively, if there are conditions for it, for the necessary measures that have already been taken in the case. According to Section 3a of the Legal Aid Act, there is no need to check the financial resources of an applicant when the person is given minor legal advice by telephone or using other electronic remote communication. There is no

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deductible for minimal legal advice.

There is no mention in the Legal Aid Act of a time limit to decide on the application for legal aid. However, Section 11(1) states that the applicant must be informed of the outcome within 7 days after the decision has been made and the decision is made by the Legal Aid Office.

The application for legal aid can be submitted in person at the Legal Aid Office or electronically, and the calculation for eligibility for legal aid can be done online on the website of the Legal Aid Office.

The applicants can use electronic services for matters related to judicial administration and they can send secure email messages.

Outcome of the request for legal aid

Section 10 (3) of the Legal Aid Act provides for the right of the Legal Aid Office, under confidentiality rules, to obtain information from the Finnish Immigration Service, free of charge, for the processing of applications for legal aid for international protection under the Aliens Act.

According to Section 14 of the Legal Aid Act, the decision on legal aid must be in writing and contain the following information:

1. Matter for which legal aid is granted,
2. The financial status of the applicant,
3. The date from which legal aid is granted,
4. What benefits are included in legal aid,
5. Possible co-responsibility share of the recipient of legal aid; and
6. The name of the assistant.

In case of a negative decision on the application for legal aid, the applicant can further appeal against it in court, under the conditions provided by Section 24 of the Legal Aid Act.

The request for the examination of the decision of the Legal Aid Office in court must be decided within 30 days of being notified of the decision of the legal aid office. However, this must occur before the solution of the main case becomes legally binding. The decision request must be submitted to the legal aid office that made the decision, in writing, with statements on the decision of the legal aid office to which the decision request applies, as well as the reasons and

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grounds of disagreement with the decision.

The legal aid decision usually states that the services are provided for a maximum of 80 hours.

According to Section 15 of the Legal Aid Act, if the conditions for granting legal aid did not exist, or they have changed or ceased, the legal aid office can change the legal aid decision or decide that the granting of legal aid ceases. The decision of the legal aid office on changes or the end of legal aid can be further appealed under the conditions set in Section 24 of the Legal Aid Act.

When the conditions for being granted legal aid changed or ceased to exist, the decision can be amended, and the legal aid can be terminated pursuant to Section 16 of the Legal Aid Act.

A review of the decision made by the Legal Aid Office can be requested within 30 days of being notified of the decision, pursuant to Section 24 of the Legal Aid Act. The request has to be made to the Legal Aid Office before the decision in the main case becomes final. The Legal Aid Office has the obligation to submit such request to the court where the matter is being heard, or which would have competence to. No appeal is available against decisions made by the Legal Aid Act. In cases where the Legal Aid Office notices reasons for rectification under the request for review, it can self-correct its own decision pursuant to Section 25 of the Legal Aid Act. Only decisions made by a court in application of the Legal Aid Act can be appealed – pursuant to Section 26 of the Legal Aid Act. The court proceedings on the granting or refusing legal aid should be separated from the main matter and dealt with as urgent matter – pursuant to Section 27 of the Legal Aid Act.

Pending a review of a negative decision on legal aid, the applicant can request the preservation of his/her rights and the public legal aid officer has the duty to take the appropriate measure to preserve the applicant’s rights pending the outcome of the review by the court – pursuant to Section 28 of the Legal Aid Act.

Legal assistance and representation at first instance determination

Service provider

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Legal aid is provided to applicants under the general rules governing legal aid – see Section 9 of the Aliens Act and the Legal Aid Act.

Section 9 of the Aliens Act provides that the right of a foreigner to receive legal aid is regulated in the Legal Aid Act (257/2002). When dealing with a matter referred to in this law, the court can grant a foreigner legal aid without requiring a means test based on the applicant's financial status. The assistant's fee is paid from state funds as stipulated in the Legal Aid Act.

State-funded legal assistance is provided by state legal aid offices which are decentralised and located at in the same municipalities as district courts. There are 23 legal aid offices throughout the country (including the Legal Aid and Public Guardianship Office of Åland). These offices provide legal services to people entitled to legal aid, based on the Legal Aid Act.

Section 8 of the Legal Aid Act provides that legal aid is provided by a public legal assistant. The applicant can request the appointment of a specific legal assistant if the later qualifies for it and upon approval by the Legal Aid Office (Section 8(3) of the Legal Aid Act).

Section 8.1 adds that in circumstances described in section 14 of the Law on the Legal Services (1133/2023), a private legal assistant can be appointed.

There is a possibility provided by Section 9 (2) of the Legal Aid Act for the Legal Aid Office to change the designated legal assistant upon justified request of the applicant or of the assistant himself for a valid reason, and the Legal Aid Office can cancel the appointment and replace with another assistant.

The Finnish Refugee Advice Center provides legal assistance to asylum applicants, beneficiaries of international protection and other foreigners.

The applicant can use the services of a private lawyer, at its own expense.

Scope of legal assistance

According to Section 1 (2) of the Legal Aid Act, legal aid includes legal advice, necessary measures and assistance in court and other authorities, as well as exemption from certain expenses related to the handling of the case as stipulated in this law.

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Section 7 of the Legal Aid Act mentions situations where legal aid will not be granted due to the nature of the case, for example if the matter is of minor importance to the applicant, there is no benefit to the applicant, the case is considered an abuse of right or the case is based on a transferred right and there is reason to assume that the transfer took place in order to obtain legal aid.

The Finnish Immigration Service announced that, while during the COVID-19 pandemic, it deviated from the requirements of the assessment criteria for information security in public administration and allowed legal counsels to participate in asylum interviews via video connection from places and devices other than those administered by the Finnish Immigration Service, in the absence of threat to life and health caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the following changes are made for remote participation in asylum interviews:

After 31 May 2024, a counsel can participate in an interview remotely only if the method of participation meets the legal information security requirements and the method of participation does not pose a risk to the confidential information processed in the asylum interview. As of 1 June 2024, remote participation requires an assessment of compliance with the information security requirements and a separate agreement with the Finnish Immigration Service.

Procedural aspects

The Aliens Act contains general rules on the right to use an interpreter or a translator during the asylum procedure.

Section 10 of the Aliens Act provides that there is a right to use an interpreter in the handling of administrative and appeal cases under this law. The authority must take care of interpretation in accordance with Section 203 of the Aliens Act. In addition to this, a foreigner can use an interpreter or translator in an administrative matter or an appeal matter at their own expense.

A person may not be used as an interpreter or translator obtained by the authority if they have such a relationship with the party concerned or the matter that their reliability may be jeopardized, or if the safety of the party concerned may be endangered. The interpreter's duty of confidentiality is regulated separately.

Only the applicant is notified of the outcome of the asylum procedure. The legal counsel is not directly notified by the Finnish Immigration Service of the decision.

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Section 10 (3) of the Legal Aid Act has been amended by Law 1135/2023, in force from 1st January 2025. the Legal Aid Office has the right to receive the necessary information from the Immigration Office free of charge for the processing of legal aid applications for international protection, despite confidentiality regulations, as referred to in the Aliens Act (301/2004).

Representation

Section 8 (2) of the Aliens Act as modified in July 2024 specifies that in the initiation and handling of the administrative matter, the party concerned may use an assistant. An attorney may also be used in the initiation and processing of an administrative matter, if the foreigner's personal hearing or attendance is not necessary to clarify the matter or to verify his identity.

Aspects related to special procedures

Legal aid for special procedures (border/accelerated/admissibility) is the same as for the regular procedure.

The proposal for introducing a border procedure in Finland mentions that no amendment is foreseen for legal aid, because it will be provided as for the regular procedure. With the newly introduced border procedure, the Finnish Immigration Service informed that applicants in the border procedure have the right to legal aid, and can meet a legal counsel during the processing of their asylum application. The legal counsel will provide advice on all matters that concern applying for asylum, but the applicant has to apply and find a legal counsel.

Applicants subject to the border procedure can benefit from free legal aid from public legal aid offices in urgent situations and can get a counsel appointed at short notice. The Finnish Immigration Service may conduct the asylum interview without the presence of a counsel if a counsel is not appointed before the interview. The legal counsel may decide whether it is necessary for him or her to be present at the interview. The reception centre or the detention unit must provide information and advice on how to get a counsel.

Aspects related to applicants with special needs

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The representative of an unaccompanied minor is different from a legal assistant in the procedure for international protection. The role of the representative is to ensure that the principle of best interests of the child is respected throughout the procedure. The legal representative of the unaccompanied minor will arrange for legal assistance for the unaccompanied minor.

The Finnish Refugee Advice center provides legal counselling to victims of human trafficking, including on applications for international protection, criminal and relevant procedures.

Legal assistance and representation in appeals

Service provider

Legal aid for appeals concerning international protection in Finland is provided by state funded legal assistants under the general rules governing legal aid – Section 9 of the Aliens Act and the Legal Aid Act.

Section 9 of the Aliens Act provides that the right of a foreigner to receive legal aid is regulated in the Legal Aid Act (257/2002). When dealing with a matter referred to in this law, the court can grant a foreigner legal aid without requiring a means test and not checking the applicant's financial status. The assistant's fee is paid from state funds as stipulated in the Legal Aid Act.

Section 30 of the Law on proceedings in administrative matters (808/2019) stipulates that a party in administrative matters before administrative courts may use a representative or an assistant who needs to be a lawyer, a public legal assistance or licensed legal assistant pursuant to the Act on Licensed Legal Aid Lawyers (715/2011).

Civil society such as the Finnish Refugee Advice Centre can provide legal assistance to asylum seekers in Finland. The Finnish Refugee Center can be contacted through the reception center or directly by call or email.

The applicant can use the services of a private lawyer, at its own expense.

Scope of legal assistance

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Legal aid in appeals concerning international protection is governed primarily by the general rules for legal aid.

According to Section 1(2) of the Legal Aid Act, legal aid includes legal advice, the undertaking of necessary measures, and assistance before courts and other authorities, along with exemptions from certain expenses related to handling the case as outlined in the law.

Section 4 of the Legal Aid Act stipulates that legal aid covers: i) fees for the lawyer as approved in the decision on legal aid, ii) interpretation and translations costs for the case processing and iii) processing fee of the case, if applicable.

Section 7 of the Legal Aid Act specifies circumstances where legal aid will not be granted, such as when the matter is of minor importance to the applicant, provides no tangible benefit, is deemed an abuse of right, or if the case arises from a transferred right with indications that the transfer occurred to exploit legal aid provisions.

Section 13 of the Legal Aid Act clarifies the scope of legal aid in appeals before administrative courts. Legal aid in such cases does not cover actions previously undertaken in administrative authorities or appeal boards. However, if the court remands the case back to the authority or board, the existing appointment of the legal counsel may remain valid for proceedings in the authority or board, provided the court specifies this in its remand order. (5/7/2019/818).

The legal assistant can assistant or represent the applicant in the proceedings pursuant to Chapter 6 of the Law on proceedings in administrative matters (808/2019).

Procedural aspects

The negative decision of the Finnish Immigration Service shall contain information and instructions related to submission of appeal, under the format of a document called ‘Appeal Instructions’. Instructions on how to appeal against a negative decision are also available on the Finnish Immigration Service dedicated page. An applicant can seek advice on appeal either from the legal representative or from the reception centre officers, according to above instructions.

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Section 8 of the Legal Aid Act establishes that legal aid is provided by public legal assistants. In appeals, a private assistant, such as a lawyer or licensed legal assistant under the Act on Licensed Legal Assistants (715/2011) can also be appointed, provided they consent to the task. A change of the appointed assistant is generally not allowed unless approved by the court, according to Section 9 of the Legal Aid Act. However, the substitute assistant must meet the requirements of qualifications of an assistant. Paragraph 2 states that the court can, in the case before it, and the legal aid office in a case other than the court's, at the justified request of the recipient of legal aid or the assistant, or on its own initiative for a valid reason, cancel the assistant's order and appoint another assistant.

Legal aid covers the fees for interpretation and translations as provided under Section 10 of the Aliens Act and Section 4 of the Legal Aid Act.

Lawyers/public legal assistants or applicants can submit the appeal and other documents electronically via a secured E-services of administrative and special courts.

Once the appeal has been submitted, the administrative court sends documents like the answer of the determining authority to the legal counsel/adviser.

According to the Act on the Openness of Government Activities, Section 11, the legal adviser/counsel shall have the right of access to the contents also of a document which is not in the public domain, if the document may influence or may have influenced the consideration of the matter. But they shall not have the right of access referred above to a document, access to which would be contrary to, among others, a very important public interest, for example in matters of national security.

The legal assistant can assist or represent the applicant in the proceedings pursuant to Chapter 6 of the Law on proceedings in administrative matters (808/2019).

Proceedings are mainly conducted in writing, but the administrative court may organise an oral hearing if it deems necessary, pursuant to Section 57 of the Law on proceedings in administrative matters (808/2019).

An electronic system has been implemented in all administrative courts since December 2020, namely the HAIPA System, which is a case management and document system. The system permits the Finnish Immigration Service, upon submission by the applicant of an appeal, to submit the information directly to

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the competent administrative court. Similarly, the Finnish Immigration Service may receive information about the appeal via the electronic HAIPA platform. When a decision is made on appeal by the administrative court, the court can also send its decisions to the Finnish Immigration Service by using the HAIPA system.

Type of appeal

Legal assistance can be provided for both types of appeal – before the administrative courts and before the Supreme Administrative Court.

Legal assistance is mandatory for applicants to submit an appeal before the Supreme Administrative Court. The applicant, who is not the authority and the administrative court, must use a lawyer, a public legal assistant or a licensed legal assistant as provided by in the Act on Licensed Legal Aid Lawyers (715/2011) in matters concerning the annulment of the decision. The requirement was introduced in 2020 and aims to ensure that additional appeals are not manifestly unfounded and to improve the quality of applications.

Representation

Section 8(3) of the Aliens Act as modified in July 2024 specifies that when initiating or handling an appeal case under this law, the party concerned may use an assistant or a representative. A foreigner can be obliged to appear in person at the court as stipulated in the Act on Trial in Administrative Matters (5/7/2019/850).

Aspects related to applicants with special needs

The Finnish Refugee Advice center provides legal counselling to victims of human trafficking, including on applications for international protection, criminal and relevant procedures.

Right to counselling in the Dublin procedure

The Aliens Act provides that applicants for international protection are entitled to legal aid during the entire application process, including for the Dublin procedure.

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The Aliens Act specifies that a person may be granted legal aid when processing a matter discussed in the said Act. The granting of legal aid is governed by the general rules enshrined in the Legal Aid Act.

State-funded legal aid is provided to persons who need expert assistance in a legal matter and who are unable to meet the costs of proceedings as a result of their economic situation. Legal aid is granted on the basis of the applicant's income, expenditures, and maintenance liability, i.e., their available means.

The applicant has the right to have his/her legal counsel present during the Dublin interview, but an absence of legal counsel does not prevent the conduct of the interview.

Access to legal aid while in detention

According to Section 123(2) of the Aliens Act, a person in detention or a legal representative must be immediately informed in writing in a language which the person understands or can reasonably be expected to understand, the grounds for detention, the handling of the detention case and the possibility of obtaining legal aid.

In appeals regarding the detention measure and its review, the detained applicant has the right to legal aid. In cases where the district court reviews the detention order pursuant to Section 128 of the Aliens Act (as amended by 4.4.2025/147)

The Act on the Treatment of Aliens Placed in Detention and Detention Units (116/2002), Section 6 provides the right to receive visits and communicate with lawyers and legal representatives. Also, the law provides that director of the detention unit must ensure that the detained applicant has an opportunity to draw up an appeal document and has a practical opportunity to participate in the processing of the appeal in the court, when the appeal concerns matter under this law, see Sections 26 and 28 of the Act on the Treatment of Aliens Placed in Detention and Detention Units (mostly elated to conditions of detention). A foreign national has the right to use a counsel and interpreter in matters related to the application of this act – see Section 30 of the Act on the Treatment of Aliens Placed in Detention and Detention Units.

In addition, as a safeguard, Section 208 of the Aliens Act provides that the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman must be notified without delay of any decision on the

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detention of a foreigner or a child's residence obligation.

Quality assurance

Selection, qualifications and training

According to the Legal Aid Office, a public legal assistant or a private legal assistant can act as a legal assistant in legal aid matters. A private legal assistant must be a lawyer or a licensed legal assistant. As a general rule, in non-trial matters, a public legal assistant acts as an assistant.

The Act on Licensed Legal Assistants (715/2011) specifies the conditions for being selected as legal assistant under Section 2 as follows:

- *Higher education - university degree in law other than a master's degree in international and comparative law or an equivalent foreign law degree which was recognised in Finland,*
- *sufficient familiarity with the duties of a legal representative and assistant – namely completion of the Bar examination, court training, or having served as a prosecutor for at least one year,*
- *the person must demonstrate honesty and that s/he is not manifestly unfit for the position of a trial attorney and assistant; and*
- *the person is not bankrupt and has no restriction to operate.*

A person who wants to act as a public legal assistant must apply for a permit to the Legal Counsel Board, pursuant to Section 6 and 7 of Act on Licensed Legal Assistants (715/2011) and is bound by the obligations listed under Section 8. The Chancellor of Justice, the Supervisory Board referred to in section 6a, subsection 1 of the Attorneys Act (Supervision Board), and the Legal Assistants Board are authority enshrined with the duty to exercise control and supervision of the work of licensed legal assistants - pursuant to Sections 9 -17 of the Act on Licensed Legal Assistants (715/2011).

The Finnish Refugee Advice Centre provides lawyers who are offering counselling to victims of human trafficking. These lawyers are specialised in the subject, as they are trained to recognise signs of human trafficking.

Mechanisms for quality assurance

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A person who wants to act as a public legal assistant must apply for a permit to the Legal Counsel Board, pursuant to Section 6 and 7 of Act on Licensed Legal Assistants (715/2011) and is bound by the obligations listed under Section 8. The Chancellor of Justice, the Supervisory Board referred to in section 6a, subsection 1 of the Attorneys Act (Supervision Board), and the Legal Assistants Board are authority enshrined with the duty to exercise control and supervision of the work of licensed legal assistants - pursuant to Sections 9 -17 of the Act on Licensed Legal Assistants (715/2011).

Amongst the obligations of the public legal assistant, Section 8 (7) stipulates that the person must “maintain and develop their professional skills and monitor legal developments, especially in the areas of law in which they work”.

From 1 January 2025, the Law on the Legal Services Agency 1133/2023 governs the work of the Legal Aid Office, including its supervision role in the granting and provision of legal aid, pursuant to Section 10 of the act.

Inter-institutional cooperation

Section 10 (3) of the Legal Aid Act has been amended by Law 1135/2023, and entered into force on 1 January 2025. The amendment grants the Legal Aid Office the right, notwithstanding confidentiality regulations, to receive the necessary information from the Finnish Immigration Office free of charge for the processing of legal aid applications for international protection as referred to in the Aliens Act (301/2004).

An electronic system has been implemented in all administrative courts since December 2020, namely the HAIPA System, which is a case management and document system. The system permits the Finnish Immigration Service, upon submission by the applicant of an appeal, to submit the information directly to the competent administrative court. Similarly, the Finnish Immigration Service may receive information about the appeal via the electronic HAIPA platform. When a decision is made on appeal by the administrative court, the court can also send its decisions to the Finnish Immigration Service by using the HAIPA system.

Legal assistance and representation for related procedures

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Reception conditions

General provisions related to legal aid are applicable.

An applicant can appeal against measures related to reception as provided by Section 55 of the Act on the reception of applicants for international protection and the identification and assistance of victims of human trafficking.

Free legal aid is provided, subject to a means test, both in renewal and in withdrawal processes by public legal aid offices and private lawyers. The scope of it is general (overall assistance in the process, as well as consultation in withdrawal processes), while in case of an appeal, the aid also included drafting of the appeal.

Family reunification

The Finnish Refugee Advice Center provides legal counselling specifically in family reunification cases, assisting applicants with the legal process and requirements.

Temporary protection procedure

The registration of an application for temporary protection is not, in principle, a specific reason to be granted legal aid and does not require legal assistance.

However, Section 9(1) of the Aliens Act and the Legal Aid Act specify that if temporary protection is denied, an applicant has the right to appeal before an administrative court. In this case, an applicant has the right to legal aid. Similarly, if a person applies for both temporary protection and asylum, he/she is entitled to seek and obtain legal aid in asylum matters in the same way as other applicants for international protection.

The Finnish Refugee Advice Centre may provide legal assistance to asylum applicants, and other foreigners.

Beneficiaries of international protection

The Finnish Refugee Advice Centre may provide legal assistance to asylum applicants, beneficiaries of international protection and other foreigners.

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