Legal Aid in the Low Countries
Legal Aid in the Low Countries
PREFACE

A lot of research has been conducted on legal aid. A lot of publications have been produced on the subject, including in Belgium and the Netherlands.

Having said this, the approaches to legal aid are also very varied: the socio-legal approach, the policy approach, the critical approach, the legal approach, etc. However, the accessibility of those studies remains limited to an ‘inner circle’ of specialists within one particular field.

The editors of Legal Aid in the Low Countries try to broaden the questions about legal aid and to give the opportunity for all these disciplines to shed their light on the matter and to confront the reader with them. Moreover, the editors are convinced that the research done in Belgium and the Netherlands has not yet reached the international scientific community due to the language barrier. Therefore, they hope this book will make a large contribution to the necessary scientific dialogue.

The editors however not only brought together what is useful and interesting. Their starting point was a clear societal and political problem definition. ‘Access to justice’ is a fundamental democratic right for all citizens. Special attention also has to be paid to those citizens who experience all sorts of difficulties in getting access to justice because of various structural or systemic reasons. Nevertheless, this special issue cannot be dealt with thoroughly without also engaging in the debate on the general theme of ‘access to justice’. The editors also wanted to stress the socio-legal approach, building bridges between society and the legal and judicial system.

But finally the editors realise that this book will not be the end of the debate, of course. A lot of work still has to be done, especially in the field of deepening socio-legal knowledge. Data often fail to give answers and a lot of work is too legalistic in nature.

Anyhow, this book will remain a ‘milestone’ when it comes to a better understanding and a better management of legal aid as a contribution to access to justice.

Em. Prof. dr. Jean Van Houtte
CONTENTS

Preface
Jean Van Houtte ................................................................. v

INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 1

Chapter 1. Legal Aid and Access to Justice: How to Look at and Evaluate Legal Aid Systems? ................................................................. 3
Bernard Hubeau and Ashley Terlouw ........................................... 3
  1. Introduction ................................................................. 3
  2. The General Context of Legal Aid ........................................... 5
  3. Access to Justice and the Right to Legal Aid/Legal Assistance ......... 7
     3.1. Role of Fundamental Social Rights ........................................... 7
     3.2. Enforceability and Effectiveness of Fundamental Social Rights .... 8
     3.3. Right to Legal Assistance for Vulnerable Groups in Society ........ 8
  4. Some Historical and Current Developments: Types of Legal Aid Systems ................................. 9
     4.1. Legal Aid Policies and their History ......................................... 9
     4.2. First Line or Level (Primary) and Second Line or Level (Secondary) Legal Aid ................................................................. 10
     4.3. ‘Judicare’, ‘Staff’ and ‘Mixed’ Models of Legal Aid ......................... 10
  5. How to Assess and Evaluate Legal Aid Systems? ................................. 13
     5.1. About Comprehensive and Generous Legal Aid Systems ................. 13
     5.2. About Types of Legal Aid .................................................. 13
     5.3. About the Five Conditions for Sound Legal Aid ......................... 14
  6. Structure of the Book .......................................................... 14

PART 1. DEVELOPMENTS IN RESEARCH ON LEGAL AID ......................... 17

Chapter 2. Dutch and Belgian Research into Disputes and Legal Services
Marijke ter Voert ................................................................. 19
  1. Introduction ................................................................. 19
  2. Incidence of Disputes and the Use of Legal Services .......................... 19
     2.1. Explaining Differences in Problems ......................................... 23
## Contents

2.2. Explaining Differences in Response to Problems ........................................... 24
3. The Use of Lawyers, Mediators and Legal Aid .................................................. 24
   3.1. Lawyers ........................................................................................................ 24
   3.2. Mediators ...................................................................................................... 25
   3.3. Legal Aid ....................................................................................................... 26
4. Quality of Services ............................................................................................ 27
   4.1. Dimensions of Quality and Information Asymmetry .................................. 27
   4.2. Research into Quality Aspects ..................................................................... 28
5. Costs of Legal Aid ............................................................................................. 30
6. Conclusion ........................................................................................................ 31

PART 2. ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND LEGAL AID: CURRENT QUESTIONS
AND PROBLEMS .................................................................................................... 33

Chapter 3. Legal Aid in Belgium and the Netherlands: Convergences and
Differences between Two Institutional Systems
Frédéric Schoenaers, Kathleen Adelaire, Christophe Mincke, Laurent Nisen
and Jean-François Reynaert ..................................................................................... 35

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................ 35
2. General Organisation of Legal Aid in Belgium and the Netherlands .............. 36
   2.1. The Netherlands ............................................................................................ 36
   2.2. In Belgium ...................................................................................................... 37
3. Conditions for Access to Legal Aid .................................................................. 37
   3.1. In the Netherlands ......................................................................................... 37
   3.2. In Belgium ...................................................................................................... 39
4. Remuneration of Lawyers .................................................................................. 40
   4.1. In the Netherlands ......................................................................................... 40
   4.2. In Belgium ...................................................................................................... 40
5. Summary ............................................................................................................ 41
6. Legal Aid in Belgium and in the Netherlands: General Trends over the
   Last Decade ........................................................................................................... 42
   6.1. Number of Certificates Issued ...................................................................... 42
       6.1.1. Number of Certificates Issued in the Netherlands .............................. 42
       6.1.2. Number of Files Closed in Belgium ...................................................... 43
   6.2. Budget Allocated to Legal Aid in Belgium and in the Netherlands ............ 44
       6.2.1. In the Netherlands ................................................................................ 44
       6.2.2. In Belgium ............................................................................................. 45
       6.2.3. Evolution of the Legal Aid Budget per Resident in France,
              Belgium and the Netherlands .................................................................. 46
7. Discussion .......................................................................................................... 47
   7.1. Differences between the Two National Contexts Considered ...................... 47
   7.2. Similarities between the Two Countries ......................................................... 47
8. Possible Solutions Intended to Control the Budget ............................................ 49
   8.1. Taking Better Account of the Real Income and Assets of Citizens .............. 49
8.2. Avoiding Disputes Concerning Sums that are too Small .......................... 49
8.3. Encouraging Alternatives to the Judicialisation of Certain Disputes ...... 50
8.4. Increasing the Individual’s Contribution ................................................. 50
  8.4.1. User Fee ......................................................................................... 50
  8.4.2. Retrocession of Legal Aid Costs where the Individual Benefits 
         from Financial Gain from Legal Proceedings ............................ 51
  8.4.3. Lowering the Threshold Conditions for Access to Completely 
         Free Legal Aid .................................................................................. 51
8.5. Generating New Financial Resources ...................................................... 51
  8.5.1. Pooling Resources via Insurance .................................................. 51
  8.5.2. Taxes Withheld on Fines ............................................................... 51
  8.5.3. Court Fees ..................................................................................... 51
9. Conclusion .................................................................................................. 51

Chapter 4. Threats to Legal Aid and Legal Assistance in the Netherlands and in 
Belgium 
Lia Combrink, Susanne Peters and Steven Gibens ................................. 53
1. Introduction ............................................................................................... 53
2. Short Description of Legal Aid and Legal Assistance in the Low Countries . 53
  2.1. The Netherlands .................................................................................. 53
  2.2. Belgium ............................................................................................... 54
3. Core Figures and Statistics ......................................................................... 55
  3.1. The Netherlands .................................................................................. 55
  3.2. Belgium ............................................................................................... 57
4. Possible Threats in the Field of Legal Aid .................................................. 60
  4.1. The Netherlands .................................................................................. 60
    4.1.1. Cutbacks during 2008 and 2010 ..................................................... 60
    4.1.2. Salduz ......................................................................................... 60
    4.1.3. Consultation Paper 2011 .............................................................. 61
    4.1.4. Possible Detrimental Consequences to Supply of the Cutback 
           Measures ....................................................................................... 62
  4.2. Belgium ............................................................................................... 63
    4.2.1. Report for the Minister in 2012 ..................................................... 63
    4.2.2. Memorandum from the Core Cabinet in 2013 ............................. 64
    4.2.3. Proposals for Reform: Will the System be Revamped? ............... 65
5. Possible Threats in the Field of Legal Assistance ....................................... 66
  5.1. The Netherlands .................................................................................. 66
  5.2. Belgium ............................................................................................... 67
6. Conclusion .................................................................................................. 68
Appendix. The Implemented and Planned Cutback Measures in the Netherlands 
in Chronological Order .............................................................. 70
Chapter 5. Every Little Helps?
   Mies Westerveld ................................................................. 73
   1. Introduction ............................................................... 73
   2. The Dutch Legal Aid System: Some Additional Data ............... 74
   3. 2008–2013: From Savings to a New Approach to Access to Justice . 77
   4. Vulnerable Groups and Access to Justice: the Multiple Claimant Phenomenon . 78
   6. Initial Results ............................................................. 81
   7. Conclusions .............................................................. 82

Chapter 6. Galanter Revisited: Do the ‘Haves’ (Still) Come out Ahead?
   Bert Niemeijer ................................................................. 85
   1. Introduction ............................................................... 85
   2. Why Haves Come out Ahead ........................................... 87
      2.1. The Importance of Repeat-Playing ............................. 87
      2.2. Passivity and Workload of Courts .............................. 87
      2.4. Favourable Rules .................................................. 88
   4. Do the Haves in Fact Come out Ahead? ............................... 89
      4.1. Empirical Evidence ............................................... 89
      4.2. Government as the Ultimate Repeat-Player .................. 90
      4.3. Complications and New Questions ........................... 91
   5. What Difference do Lawyers Make? ................................ 92
   6. Do Repeat-Players Come out Ahead in Out-of-Court Settings? .... 93
   7. Relevant Research in the Netherlands ................................ 96
      7.1. Access to Legal Services ....................................... 96
      7.2. Explanation of Dispute Behaviour ............................. 96
      7.3. Dealing with Legal Problems .................................. 98
   8. The (Legal) World has Profoundly Changed ........................ 99
      8.1. Social Changes .................................................... 99
      8.2. A Changed Landscape of Dispute Institutions ............... 99
      8.3. Legal Services .................................................. 100
      8.4. Rule Change ..................................................... 100
      8.5. Parties ............................................................. 101
   9. Galanter Revisited ...................................................... 101

PART 3. LEGAL AID IN SPECIFIC LEGAL MATTERS ................. 103

Chapter 7. Providing Legal Aid in Asylum Procedures in the Netherlands:
   A Challenging Business?
   Tamara Butter .............................................................. 105
   1. Introduction .............................................................. 105
2. The Practice Area of Asylum Law in the Netherlands ............................... 107
3. Institutional Context ............................................................................. 108
   3.1. Legal Aid System ........................................................................ 108
   3.2. Requirements for Legal Aid Providers under the Legal Aid Scheme .... 109
   3.3. Asylum Procedure ................................................................. 110
      3.3.1. Main Actors and Institutions in the Asylum Procedure ...... 110
      3.3.2. Asylum Procedure ............................................................ 110
      3.3.3. General Asylum Procedure and the Lawyer's Role .......... 110
      3.3.4. Appeal Procedures and Time Limits ............................. 112
   3.4. Process of Appointment ............................................................ 112
   3.5. Remuneration of Legal Aid Providers ......................................... 113
4. Key Issues Arising from the Institutional Context ............................... 113
   4.1. Short Time Limits .................................................................... 114
   4.2. Payment System Based on Fixed Fees .................................... 116
      4.2.1. Is the Fixed Fee an Issue? ................................................ 117
      4.2.2. Two or Three Cases in a Set? .......................................... 118
5. Coping Strategies in the General Asylum Procedure ............................ 119
6. Conclusion ......................................................................................... 120

Chapter 8. Access to Legal Services for Small and Medium-Sized Businesses
Heinrich Winter, Oscar Couwenberg and Marc Hertogh .......................... 123
1. Introduction ....................................................................................... 123
2. Factors Influencing Access to Legal Services .................................. 124
   2.1. Visibility .................................................................................. 125
   2.2. Price ....................................................................................... 125
   2.3. Services ................................................................................... 125
   2.4. Impact of the Legal System ..................................................... 126
   2.5. Impact of Legal Aid Insurance .............................................. 126
   2.6. Image ...................................................................................... 127
3. Procedural Justice ............................................................................ 127
4. Data Collection and Analysis ........................................................... 127
5. Results .............................................................................................. 128
   5.1. Visibility .................................................................................. 128
   5.2. Price ....................................................................................... 129
      5.2.1. Expertise .......................................................................... 131
      5.2.2. Commitment .................................................................... 131
      5.2.3. Client's Interest vs. Own Interests .................................. 131
      5.2.4. Notifying the Client ......................................................... 132
      5.2.5. Communication .............................................................. 132
      5.2.6. Keeping to Agreements Made ....................................... 132
      5.2.7. Reliability ........................................................................ 132
      5.2.8. Impact of the Legal System ........................................... 134
      5.2.9. Impact of Legal Aid Insurance ....................................... 134
      5.2.10. Image ............................................................................... 135
6. Analysis: 'One-Shotters' and 'Repeat-Players' and the Importance of Procedural Justice ......................................................... 135
7. Conclusion .................................................................................. 138

Chapter 9. Legal Aid and Housing Issues
Steven Gibens and Bernard Hubeau .................................................. 141
1. General Context: the Right to Housing (and the Right to Legal Assistance) . 141
2. The Legal and Social 'Mapping' of Legal Aid in Housing Issues in Belgium 143
   2.1. The Housing Market in Belgium .............................................. 143
   2.2. Legal Context in the Flemish Region .................................... 143
   2.3. Tenant Unions (Huurdersbonden) .......................................... 144
   2.4. In the Social (Public) Renting Sector .................................... 147
   2.5. Housing Shops ................................................................. 147
   2.6. Social Renting Offices (Sociale verhuurkantoren) .................... 148
   2.7. Coordination Structure for Tenant Organisations .................. 148
3. The Legal and Social 'Mapping' of Legal Aid in Housing Issues in the Netherlands ................................................................. 149
   3.1. The Housing Market in the Netherlands ............................... 149
   3.2. Dutch Housing Union (Nederlandse Woonbond) .................... 151
   3.3. Rent Teams (Huurteams) .................................................... 152
   3.4. Residents’ Participation ...................................................... 153
   3.5. Social Counsellors .............................................................. 154
   3.6. Legal Services Counter ...................................................... 155
4. Comments on the Characteristics of 'Good Legal Aid': Are they Met in Housing Issues? ................................................................. 156
   4.1. Characteristics in General .................................................. 156
   4.2. Similarities between Belgium and the Netherlands .................. 157
   4.3. Differences between Belgium and the Netherlands ................ 159
   4.4. The Housing Market and Effects 'On the Ground' .................. 159

Chapter 10. Legal Aid Provisions for Children and Juveniles: Formal and Quality Items
Eric Van der Mussele ................................................................. 161
1. Introduction ................................................................................. 161
2. Certain Questions and Doubts ..................................................... 161
3. International Legal Aid Provisions for Children and Juveniles: Formal and Quality Elements ....................................................... 164
   3.1. United Nations ................................................................. 164
   3.2. Council of Europe ............................................................ 164
      3.2.1. European Convention on Human Rights ......................... 164
      3.2.2. Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on Child Friendly Justice .................................. 165
   3.3. European Union ............................................................... 165
4.1.4. Conclusions ................................................................. 195
4.2. National Legislation in Belgium and the Netherlands ..................... 195
  4.2.1. Belgium ................................................................. 195
  4.2.2. The Netherlands .................................................. 199
5. Some Empirical and Concrete Practical Concerns ............................ 201
  5.1. Right to Interpretation and Translation in First Line Legal Aid ....... 201
  5.2. Language of Communication .......................................... 203
  5.3. Quality Control of the Interpretation and Translation .................. 204
  5.4. Training ................................................................. 204
  5.5. Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct ................................ 204
  5.6. Problem of Organisation and Budgets ................................ 204
  5.7. Training of the Legal Aid Provider ................................... 205
6. Conclusions ........................................................................ 205

Chapter 12. The Right to Legal Aid According to the European Court of Human Rights: A Study of the Rights of Undocumented Persons
Caroline Forder ................................................................. 209

1. Case Study ................................................................. 209
2. The Legal Claims of Undocumented Persons ................................ 210
3. Who are Undocumented Persons? .......................................... 211
4. International Legal Rules regarding the Entitlement to Legal Aid .......... 214
  4.1. The Right to Legal Aid .................................................. 216
  4.2. Duty of the State to Provide Legal Aid in Civil Cases Depends on the Circumstances .................................................. 218
  4.3. Criteria Indicating for or against a Right to Legal Aid ............... 219
    4.3.1. Legal Requirement for Legal Representation .................... 219
    4.3.2. Complexity of Proceedings ........................................ 219
    4.3.3. Degree of Difficulty of the Case ................................. 219
    4.3.4. Emotional Involvement .......................................... 221
    4.3.5. The Fact that the Other Party is Legally Represented and/or has Legal Aid .......................................................... 221
    4.3.6. 'No Arguable Ground' ............................................. 222
    4.3.7. Case 'Lacks Reasonable Prospects of Success' ................... 222
    4.3.8. Fairness of the Proceedings must be Judged on their Entirety .... 223
    4.3.9. Subject Matter of Proceedings 'Not of Sufficient Substance' ...... 224
    4.3.10. Vulnerable Persons and Particularly Invasive Proceedings affecting Article 8 Rights .............................................. 224
5. Application of the European Court's Rules to Claims by Undocumented Persons .................................................. 226
  Jurisprudence ....................................................................... 228
Chapter 13. Differential Treatment: Do Lawyers Make the Difference?
Ashley Terlouw ................................................................. 231
1. Introduction ................................................................. 231
2. What is Specific about Equal Treatment Cases? .................. 233
3. The Broad Spectrum of Legal Aid Providers in Equal Treatment Cases .................. 236
5. Access to Lawyers and Problems for Lawyers .................. 238
   5.1. Money ................................................................. 239
   5.2. Knowledge .......................................................... 241
   5.3. Availability and Availability of Alternatives .................. 242
   5.4. Trust, Expectations and Distance ............................... 244
   5.5. Filtering ............................................................. 246
6. How to Improve Access to Justice: What is the Role of Lawyers in this Respect? ............. 248
7. Analyses ........................................................................ 249

PART 4. ETHICAL QUESTIONS ............................................... 253

Chapter 14. Modernising the Napoleonic Structure of Bar Regulation
Nienke Doornbos and Leny de Groot-van Leeuwen ............................................. 255
1. Introduction ................................................................. 255
2. Searching for a Balance between Government Control and Self-Regulation: Theoretical Notions ................................. 257
3. Reform in Belgium .......................................................... 260
4. Reform in the Netherlands .................................................. 261
5. Converging Developments ................................................. 263
6. Differences between the Two Countries in Light of the Theory .................................. 264
7. Conclusions .................................................................... 266
8. Epilogue ........................................................................ 267

Chapter 15. Independence of the Lawyer in the Netherlands and Belgium and Conflict of Interest
Edward Janssens ................................................................. 269
1. Introduction ................................................................. 269
2. Basic Principles concerning Lawyers’ Independence and the Obligation to Avoid Conflicts of Interest .................................................. 269
   2.1. Independence .......................................................... 270
   2.2. The Obligation to Avoid Conflict of Interest .................. 270
3. Independence of the Lawyer ............................................. 271
   3.1. Structural and Organisational Independence ................ 271
       3.1.1. Independence from the Legislator ......................... 271
       3.1.2. Independence of the Executive ......................... 273
       3.1.3. Independent from the Judicial Power ................. 276
3.2. Independence of the Lawyer Himself ........................................ 277
4. Conflict of Interest ............................................................... 277
5. Conclusion ............................................................................. 281

Chapter 16. Legal Aid and Pro Bono Work: Part of the Essence of Lawyering?
Stefan Rutten ................................................................. 283
1. Participating in Second line Legal Aid Programs vs. Pro Bono Work ........ 284
2. Historical and Ethical Basis of Pro Bono Work Sensu Lato ................. 284
4. Arguments in the Discussion about a Mandatory Pro Bono Obligation .... 287
5. Acting Pro Bono: A Professional Obligation for Every Lawyer ............. 289

PART 5. ALTERNATIVES .............................................................. 291

Chapter 17. Socio-Legal Services: The Link between Legal Aid and Social Work in a Democratic Market
Steven Gibens ................................................................. 293
1. Introduction ............................................................................. 293
2. General Context: The Evolution of the Legal Assistance Market – A Place for Social Legal Services? ......................................................... 293
  2.1. Evolution of Legal Aid ......................................................... 293
  2.2. Social Work and Legal Aid: A Profile ................................... 295
  2.3. Socio-Legal Services in a Democratic Market ......................... 296
  3.1. The (Democratic) Market of Socio-Legal Services .................... 297
  3.2. Is the Legal Market for People in Need Democratic? ................ 301
4. What Should a Model of Integration between Legal Aid and Social Work Ideally Look Like? ......................................................... 303
5. Conclusion ............................................................................. 305

Chapter 18. E-Justice in the Low Countries
Koen Van Aeken ................................................................. 307
1. Introduction ............................................................................. 307
2. Definitions and Research Strategy ............................................... 309
3. Empirical Research ................................................................ 310
  3.1. Belgium ............................................................................. 310
    3.1.1. Actual Online Services .............................................. 310
    3.1.2. Political Developments in Belgium ............................... 311
  3.2. The Netherlands ................................................................. 312
    3.2.1. Current Online Services ............................................. 312
    3.2.2. Political Developments in the Netherlands ................. 314
  3.3. The EU ............................................................................. 314

xvi
Contents

4. Towards Explaining the Current State of E-justice in Belgium and the Netherlands ......................................................... 315
   4.1. Judicial Culture ........................................................................... 316
   4.2. Legal Statism ............................................................................ 318
   4.3. Origins in the Commercial Domain .......................................... 319

5. Opportunities and Limits of E-justice .............................................. 321
   5.1. Benefits and Opportunities: The Internal Dimension ................. 321
   5.2. Benefits and Opportunities: The External Dimension ............... 323
   5.3. Limits and Challenges: An Internal Perspective ......................... 324
   5.4. Limits and Challenges: An External Perspective ....................... 326

6. Legal Aid Policy, the State and E-justice ........................................... 326
   Legislation .................................................................................. 328

CONCLUSION ................................................................. 329

Chapter 19. Stepping Stones towards a Sound Legal Aid System in the Future:
Concluding Remarks
   Ashley Terlouw and Bernard Hubeau ............................................ 331
   1. The Systems of Legal Aid in Belgium and the Netherlands Compared ........ 331
   2. Are the Five Conditions for Sound Legal Aid Systems Met? ............... 333
   3. Ethical Considerations: What is Quality and How to Detect Unqualified Lawyers? ...................................................... 335
   4. Alternatives and Solutions: Heading to a Multi-Level Approach? .......... 338
   5. The Future of Legal Aid in the Low Countries ................................. 339

Bibliography ................................................................. 343