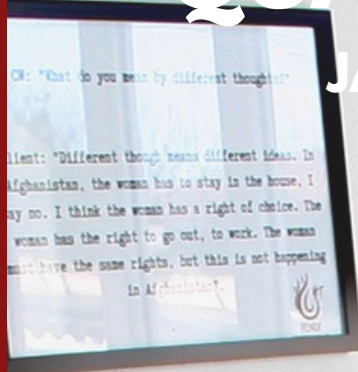


QUARTERLY REPORT

JANUARY - MARCH 2022



FENIX
HUMANITARIAN LEGAL AID

CONTEXT

At the beginning of 2022 the situation on both Lesvos and the Greek mainland was very different to previous years. While the numbers of people living on and arriving to the islands continued to decrease, 2021 was the first year in which the majority of people arrived to the mainland - 53% - where thousands of people already live in legal limbo. The attention has been moving away to other places, especially since the situation in Ukraine, but Fenix continued to witness how the legal and protection crisis in Greece is far from over.

The approximately 100 people who continued to arrive to Lesvos each month were rushed into interviews at an even faster pace: there are now no more than two days between registration and the interview. This leaves people without the necessary time to get settled and informed about the procedure and their rights, let alone prepare for their interview and access legal aid from a lawyer.

The vast majority do not get proper and timely medical or vulnerability screenings, with severe consequences for their well-being and asylum procedure. Fenix still has to inform the authorities of minors, victims of torture, and otherwise vulnerable people who should be having their procedure on the mainland.

At the same time, more and more people get stuck in the asylum procedure. While Greece keeps rejecting the admissibility of the asylum claims of people from five specific nationalities, based on the idea that Turkey is safe for them, Turkey has not been accepting readmissions for two years. This leaves many without access to the Greek asylum procedure, nor with any other place to turn. They live in limbo without access to their most basic needs.

Others cannot move forward with their asylum procedure because they do not have access to legal aid, or because they do not have the financial means to pay the recently implemented fee to submit second (and further) subsequent applications: each individual now needs to pay 100 euro - a family of 5 should pay 500 euro. This fee is something most individuals who have been in the asylum procedure for such a long time do not have. And for many this application is a crucial step in finding safety, considering the conditions in which their first interview(s) have taken place.

The lack of access to the asylum procedure and the protracted situation of legal limbo has severe implications for the mental health and well-being of people who seek asylum. Our psychologists saw how an increased number of people express feelings of despair and hopelessness, and suffer from health issues.

Despite the decreasing refugee population and several demonstrations by the local community, the construction of the new camp on Lesvos continued. This leaves many worried, expecting that the camp will further decrease the availability of support to those forced to live there.

In this context, access to legal aid is more crucial than ever to help people navigate the asylum system and overcome the procedural and legal barriers that prevent them from effectively having their right to asylum realised.

Fenix has adapted its services and installed a container in camp, as well as opened an office in Athens, where 30% of our clients are based. This allows us to ensure a continuation of care and easier access to our clients.

OUR WORK IN NUMBERS



We took on **8** new clients, from Somalia, the DRC, Sudan and Syria, for family reunification and full representation throughout the asylum procedure



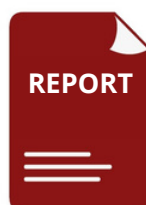
4 clients reunited with their families in **4** different European countries.



7 clients received positive decision on their asylum claim



4 clients were relocated to Italy as part of a relocation program

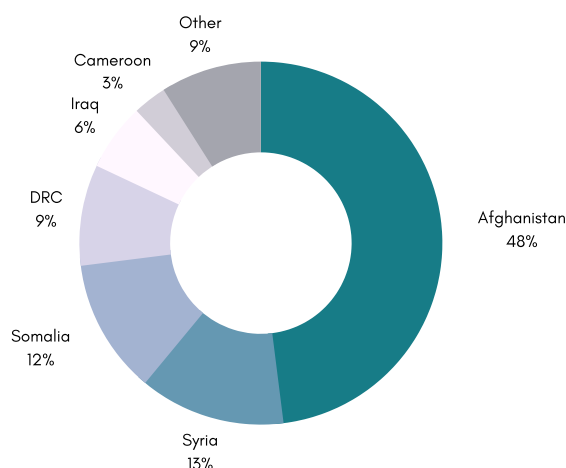


We published **3** extensive reports and **2** press releases advocating for positive change at the local, national, and European level.



97 clients have received holistic legal aid in the first quarter of 2022

OUR CLIENTS



Countries of origin of our current clients
(total of 108 people)

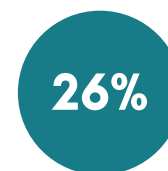
'Other' includes Ghana, Sudan, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Iran and Sierra Leone



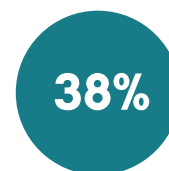
Survivors of Gender Based Violence



Victims of Torture and Violence



Unrecognized Unaccompanied Minors



People with disabilities, severe medical or mental health conditions



HOLISTIC LEGAL AID

One of our unrecognized minor clients reunited with his brother in Italy!

Our holistic approach to legal aid not only allows us to provide a more comprehensive service to our clients, but also increases our impact in overcoming barriers to accessing the right to asylum. The cases of Z and F are examples of this.

Z - SINGLE SOMALI WOMEN

Since the implementation of the Joint Ministerial Decision that declared Turkey a safe third country for Somalis (among others), we have started to target our holistic legal aid services to single women from Somalia. These women now do not have direct access to the Greek asylum procedure, despite often having survived severe forms of (gender based) violence in their country of origin as well as in Turkey, and having little to no support available in Turkey. Before they can get their asylum claim heard, they need to pass an admissibility interview in which they prove that they are not safe in Turkey.

Z was separated from her family at a very young age, endured forced labor and was then trafficked to Turkey. It was thus crucial for her to access the Greek asylum procedure. Z's lawyers prepared her for the admissibility interview while the protection team ensured proper medical attention, as well as getting her vulnerabilities correctly recognized. Z passed the admissibility interview, after which her lawyers prepared her for the asylum interview and submitted an extensive memo to support her claim.

Z received refugee status, like all our other single women clients from Somalia!

F - UNRECOGNIZED UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

F arrived to Lesbos as a minor, but was wrongfully registered as an adult and subjected to multiple rights violations. This posed serious challenges to his well-being and barriers to accessing his rights. **Fenix supported him to overcome these barriers.**

F's first age assessment was conducted poorly and concluded that he was an adult, despite F having original documents proving otherwise. Our **legal team** successfully appealed these results, something that was unheard of until that moment, and F got a new assessment. Again, all existing procedures were violated and F was still assessed to be an adult. This while other minor clients whose age was reassessed by a special task force, were all recognized as minors.

During the entire process, which took almost a year, F was subjected to inappropriate living conditions, sharing a large tent with single men in which he witnessed incidents of violence and substance abuse. In the winter the tent burnt down and F lost all his belongings, including important documents.

His well-being deteriorated due to the long waiting time and uncertainty. F felt disappointed, stressed and frustrated. Our mental health team supported him to cope with his emotions, and continue the procedure at moments he was ready to give up. The **protection team** continuously helped F to navigate the system and challenges he had to endure, and ensured access to medical care, better accommodation, and psychosocial activities such as sports and language classes.

Finally, after a year of uncertainty and rights violations, F received refugee status and can start to build his life in safety!

ADVOCACY & STRATEGIC



Fenix team discussing a advocacy strategies

EU - TURKEY RELATIONS

March marked the anniversaries of three crucial events in the context of asylum in Greece: 11 years since the start of the war in Syria, which led to the increase in people seeking asylum in Europe, 6 years since the EU-Turkey statement that was aimed at halting this increase, and 2 years since the readmissions to Turkey, crucial part of the Statement, have been suspended. These have been key in shaping today's EU migration policy, and have ultimately led to the restriction of access to asylum in Greece and the EU. Fenix published [a report on the narrowing access to asylum](#), describing the current situation and calling on the Greek government to halt the way they are expanding upon the EU Turkey statement with the implementation of new restrictive asylum laws. Besides, we [addressed the issue](#) of legal limbo that thousands of people have ended up in after the suspension of the readmissions to Turkey to the European Commission, asking for their intervention to get claims examined on the merits.

SUBSEQUENT APPLICATIONS

After months of refusal to register second and following subsequent applications, registrations started again in February 2022. However, each application costs €100 per applicant in the case. This means that a family of five will have to pay €500 to reapply for asylum. Many are unable to pay this sum of money after having been in limbo for extensive periods of time, rendering the access to asylum for those who want to submit a second and following subsequent applications almost non-existent. Together with other organisations, we published [an open letter](#) calling the competent authorities to respect the fundamental right to seek asylum and refrain from taking actions

that violate this and other rights of people who seek asylum.

SOGIESC CLAIMS

Fenix documented that most applicants with a claim based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) face illegal and bad questioning during their interview, as well as additional barriers to access their rights. We [published an interdisciplinary report](#) that examines and contributes to the discussion surrounding the prevalence and consequences of procedural violations during asylum interviews and in the assessment of SOGIESC claims in Europe. Insights from our MHPSS team provide a complementary frame of reference, drawing attention to the detrimental impacts that flawed and unlawful procedures have on the wellbeing and mental health of people seeking international protection. The report was complemented by awareness campaign on our social media channels.

SELECTIVE SOLIDARITY

Quickly after the conflict in Ukraine, Europe swiftly activated the Temporary Protection Directive to respond to the large influx of people seeking safety, giving them direct access to a form of international protection. While Fenix welcomes this response, this clearly demonstrates a dual standard applied to different people who seek asylum. The problem is not the lack of capacity of the EU and its Member States, but the lack of political will to welcome people from certain backgrounds. [In our statement](#) we emphasised that solidarity with those in search of safety should not be based on any sort of proximity, may it be geographical, racial or religious.

CAPACITY BRIDGING & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Two participants to the SOGIESC workshop

Our Capacity Bridging program is aimed at bridging diverse forms of knowledge between different actors intervening in refugee support services in Greece, to achieve a more holistic and collaborative outcome and work towards the best possible services for the people we work for. We connect participants with essential information, knowledge and resources that can positively impact their projects.

SOGIESC

Based on our experience with clients who have a claim based on their SOGIESC and the findings of our report, we developed a training and workshops to also better equip other organisations to provide services to the growing group of people with claims based on their SOGIESC on Lesbos and in Greece. The trainings were tailored to cultural mediators, medical, shelter and WASH actors and included a basic introduction of what diverse SOGIESC is, an overview of the legal protections and best practices in working with people with diverse SOGIESC. The trainings were attended by 24 people from 10 different organisations. **83% stated that understand better how they can support people with diverse SOGIESC.**

"I better understood the barriers facing people, and the legal / biased basis of these. The practical section at the end was useful for our team to learn how to better help those who would like to make a SOGI asylum claim."

Besides the trainings on Lesbos, Fenix's has also given lectures at the University of Amsterdam and spoken to different media outlets build on peoples knowledge of the issue.

SAFAGUARDING

We regularly provide training on safeguarding, an extremely relevant issue when working with vulnerable populations which is unfortunately not always part of staff or volunteer inductions. Fenix jumps in this gap by providing safeguarding trainings to different organisations, covering among others the principles of safeguarding, types of vulnerabilities, and power relations between staff or volunteers and people for whom their projects are designed.

"This training was great and I would suggest any volunteer take this training before starting work with vulnerable groups."

"how to manage reporting of abuse in safe and ethical way with regards to possible further harm and respect to peoples right to be anonymous"

THE ASLYUM PROCEDURE

Fenix found that humanitarian actors working in other sectors often do not have previous knowledge on the the asylum procedure. We provide regular training to increase this knowledge, believing that this leads to increased quality of service provision. One of our trainings is specifically tailored to medical actors, with whom we work closely to provide our clients with documentation that supports their asylum claim. Examples are scar and body maps that can testify surviving torture, or documentation that certify incidents of gender based violence.

"[I comprehend] the status and position on the process of the people I work with, as well as the steps that they went through or are still missing"

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS



Z reunited with her son!

As a holistic legal aid organisation, the impact of our work includes positive asylum decisions or family reunifications, but also extends beyond that. In a context in which clients face numerous and fast barriers to access their rights, the following examples highlight the various successes in overcoming those barriers.

A client had difficulties communicating and was in an extremely precarious health situation when we first met. Fenix advocated for him to receive medical attention, psychological care, and support with food and non-food deliveries. After a few weeks, his well-being had significantly improved. He also felt safe enough to express crucial incidents of violence and trauma to the team working on his case, which empowered him to do so during his asylum interview as well.

S arrived to Lesbos in March 2020, and lived in extremely difficult conditions in a large Rubb Hall in Moria with two friends - all three had disabilities and were supporting each other. After the fire, S's friends were transferred to Germany and he stayed behind. Months later, we managed to get him reunited with his brother on the mainland. And shortly after, his brother and him were relocated to Italy, where they can build their life in safety!

In 2021, we prepared minors who were wrongfully registered as adults to go through their age assessment. Two of them contacted us to inform us that they are now finally recognized as minors and have moved to safe shelters, while two others have already received refugee status!

A client has such severe mental health issues as a result of his trauma, that it was almost impossible to communicate with him. After a lot of patience and effort from our teams to build trust and create a safe space for him, he was finally able to open up and start telling us about his traumatic experiences.

Z is the mother of one of our very first translators. She had been in Greece for almost three years. Z was alone, separated from her children and the only family she could be with. This quarter, Z was finally reunited with her sons in Switzerland, so the family is back together. We are so happy that she can finally hug her sons again: [click here](#) to see them reunited!

After many months of waiting, uncertainty and legal limbo because lodging second (and further) subsequent applications was not possible, several of our clients finally got their applications admitted! This not only means that they finally have the option to get their claim heard, but also that they will have access to cash assistance and other services again.

FINANCES

In the first quarter of 2022, our team consisted of 28 long term volunteers and staff, including our eight hired Greek staff.

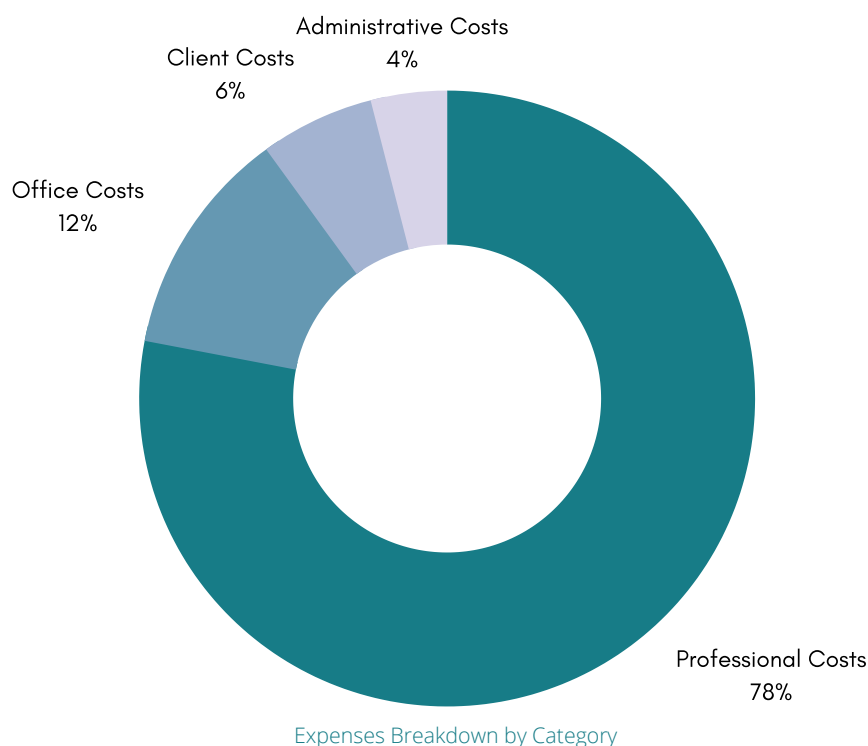
The support we received from our donors allowed us to **continue our services to 198 people.**

96%

Program Costs

4%

Overhead Costs



Expenses Breakdown by Category

This quarter with our office all set up, our office costs decreased. At the same time, our professional costs increased by 7% due the hiring of several new staff members, in our holistic legal, advocacy and operations teams.

Our **main expense was again professional staff** which represented 78% of our costs. As a legal organization our priority continues to be the building of our capacity and expertise through investing in our long term and

professional staff, allowing for sustainability and stability.

96% of the money donated to Fenix was used to provide services to our clients and impacting the asylum system. Every Euro donated counts towards continuing our three programs of Holistic Legal Aid, Advocacy and Strategy, and Capacity Bridging and Community Engagement.

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