

Protection Cluster's Legal Aid Working Group

Legal Trends meetings: how they emerged, evolved and support humanitarian legal aid

Why the Legal Aid Working Group exists

- Created in 2022 in response to the increasing number of legal issues affecting war-affected populations in Ukraine.
- Provides a space to identify contradictory administrative and judicial practices and exchange experience among lawyers from different organisations, regions and specialisations.
- Coordinates the efforts of humanitarian legal aid providers, the state-funded Free Legal Aid Centre and donor-funded actors.
- Supports increased legal awareness among war-affected populations and, ultimately, the quality of legal services provided.

Key LAWG activities

LAWG

General monthly meetings

Presentations on specific pre-selected topics, with video recording. By default, held on the first Tuesday, 15:00–16:30.

Monthly Legal Trends meetings

Not focused on a single pre-selected topic. Organisations submit written observations in advance for discussion with the wider audience. By default, held on the last working day of the month.

Other LAWG activities

Legal Aid Quality Assurance Core Group; webinars; ad-hoc meetings; drafting of informational materials.

Key thematic areas covered by LAWG (and examples)

SCOPE

Housing

Registration of property rights for applying to compensation mechanisms

Property

Inheritance cases opened in areas now under temporary occupation

Pensions

Payment of pension debt

Documents

Obtaining / restoration of ID cards

Freedom of movement

Overcoming artificial restrictions imposed by Russia on TOT travellers

Land

Land tax exemption in areas affected by hostilities

Social

Appointment / prolongation / restoration of IDP allowance

Labour

Labour disputes, including non-payment of salary

Legal facts

Birth/death certificates for people born/died in TOTs

Education

Privileges for university applicants from TOTs

A broad professional network

183

Mailing-list addresses

42

Organisations
represented

21

Other practicing lawyers

Who participates?

State-funded Free Legal Aid Centre; UN agencies; EU institutions; international and national humanitarian legal aid providers; unions of smaller legal networks.

Why this matters

The network brings together legal practitioners with different geographic coverage, organisational mandates and areas of specialisation.

Legal Trends meetings: how they emerged and evolved

EVOLUTION



The format evolved in response to the volume and complexity of emerging legal issues and the need for deeper discussion and in-person networking.

What the Legal Trends mechanism is designed to achieve

PURPOSE



The meetings also facilitate

Exchange of positive and negative court and administrative practice; seeking solutions and advice in extraordinary or complicated legal cases; and reporting emerging issues in the application of law in specific locations — whether they have been detected elsewhere.

How the meetings work in practice

FORMAT

Meeting cycle

- Usually held in a hybrid offline–online format on the last working day of the month.
- Members submit monthly legal trends observations two working days before the meeting.
- Meetings currently run from 11:00 to 16:00, with an one hour break.
- Participation combines online and in-person discussion.



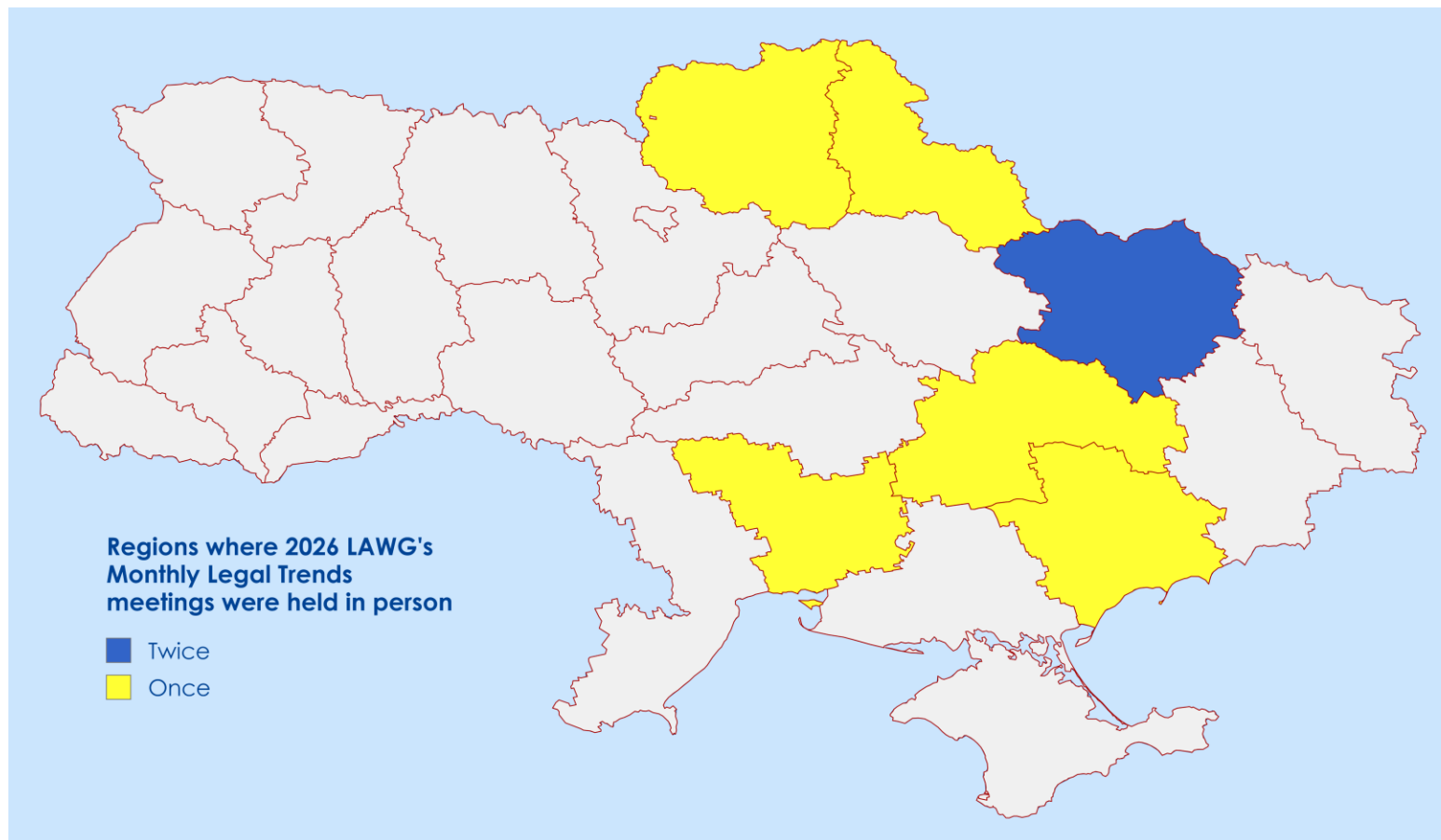
Working in wartime conditions

- Because of regular Russian air attacks on Ukrainian cities, meetings must be conducted in a shelter, typically on the -1 floor.
- Premises need a stable connection and equipment to continue the meeting for both offline and online participants during air alarms.
- Finding suitable premises is often challenging and requires separate negotiations in each city and we express gratitude to the partners hosting our meetings.

Taking the discussion closer to the field

GEOGRAPHIC REACH

- Meetings have already been held in Mykolaiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv (twice), Zaporizhzhia, Dnipro and Sumy.
- The hybrid modality keeps online participation while creating opportunities for closer in-person communication, networking and new connections among field-based colleagues.
- The location is not merely logistical: holding meetings in different regions helps bring locally observed legal trends into the wider coordination discussion.



Mykolaiv

Chernihiv

Kharkiv ×2

Zaporizhzhia

Dnipro

Sumy

Language, documentation and follow-up

Working language

The meetings are conducted entirely in Ukrainian, without interpretation into English. This avoids losing time to interpretation and reflects the technical nature of narrow legal discussions within the Ukrainian legislative framework and the core audience of practising lawyers, legal coordinators and advocacy colleagues.



Legal Aid Bulletin

The meetings also produce a Legal Aid Bulletin: a 2–3–4 page bilingual English–Ukrainian product, usually issued monthly, published on ReliefWeb and circulated among LAWG members.

Examples available

[January 2026](#) • [February–March 2026](#) • [April 2026](#) • [May 2026](#)

The source document contains direct ReliefWeb links to each bulletin.

Nine monthly meetings in 2026: scale of the mechanism

STATISTICS

190

Legal trends discussed

21+

Trends per meeting on average

50–60

Online participants per meeting

Up to 20

Offline participants per meeting

Top contributors to the Legal Trends meetings

1. Right to Protection CF
2. The Tenth of April NGO
3. Norwegian Refugee Council
4. International Rescue Committee
5. Caritas Ukraine CF
6. Danish Refugee Council
7. Legal Development Network
8. Step NGO
9. Polish Humanitarian Action
10. Southern Development Strategy NGO

Written contributions across the nine meetings / 190 legal trends

Right to Protection (R2P): 112 trends
The Tenth of April (TTA): 37 trends
Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC): 16 trends

What does a Legal Trend look like?

Two examples illustrate how emerging practice can reveal a legal pathway for people affected by hostilities and occupation.

HLP example

Damaged property • no ownership documents •
acquisitive prescription • pathway to compensation

Non-HLP example

Death in occupied territory • no official
documentation • judicial establishment of death

HLP example: ownership recognised through acquisitive prescription

CASE STUDY 1

1. The situation

A person continuously lived with their family in a house in a village in Mykolaiv Oblast, since 2003; they repaired and maintained the property and paid utility bills.

2. The legal barrier

The person had no ownership documents. A BTI archival certificate confirmed that no technical inventory had been conducted before 2021 and ownership had never been registered.

3. The impact of hostilities

The house was damaged by hostilities in August 2025. Without ownership documents, the applicant could not access state compensation mechanisms.

4. The legal response

Lawyers prepared a claim seeking judicial recognition of ownership rights through acquisitive prescription.

5. The court

Ochakiv Court of Mykolaiv Oblast fully upheld the claim ([Case No. 483/1682/25](#)).

6. The practical result

Recognition of ownership enabled the beneficiary to initiate the procedure for obtaining compensation for the damaged housing.

Acquisitive prescription

Acquisition of ownership of property by a person who has possessed it in good faith, openly and continuously for the period prescribed by law.

Non-HLP example: establishing death on limited evidence

CASE STUDY 2

1. The situation

An individual died in a village in the part of the Kherson Oblast, which is currently under temporary occupation.

2. The documentation gap

Because of the occupation, relatives were unable to obtain medical or other official documents confirming the death.

3. The evidence available

The only available evidence was an unofficial handwritten certificate.

4. The judicial response

The Prymorskyi Court of Odesa City established the fact of death, considering the objective circumstances of temporary occupation and the available informal evidence.

5. A wider emerging practice

Lawyers also highlighted another positive precedent in which a court established the fact of death solely based on an extract from the Unified Register of Pre-Trial Investigations (URPI).

Case

[Case No. 522/8356/26-E](#) • 18 May 2026

What the two examples demonstrate

KEY MESSAGE

War and occupation disrupt ordinary legal pathways

Formal ownership records may be absent; official civil-status documents may be impossible to obtain.

Legal aid identifies workable alternatives

Lawyers identify relevant legal mechanisms, prepare claims and bring emerging judicial or administrative practice back to the coordination forum.

Courts can adapt existing mechanisms to exceptional circumstances

The two cases show positive judicial practice addressing documentation gaps affecting property rights and civil status.

The trend becomes a shared resource

Once discussed by practitioners, the experience can inform legal-aid responses, further advocacy and the wider Legal Aid Bulletin.

From individual cases to coordinated legal response

- Legal Trends meetings provide a structured space for humanitarian legal practitioners to identify emerging problems and compare practice across regions and organisations.
- The mechanism has evolved in response to the growing volume and complexity of legal issues affecting war-affected populations.
- Discussion can turn an isolated administrative or judicial practice into a shared legal-aid response and, where necessary, an advocacy issue.
- The resulting Legal Aid Bulletin extends the value of the discussion beyond the meeting itself.

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