

# 2024

REPORT & PLANS FOR 2025

# ANNUAL REPORT

**HALINA NIEĆ LEGAL AID CENTER**

*A summary of activities, programs and  
overview of results in 2024, plans and  
goals for 2025*

# 2024



We are an NGO of lawyers providing **free legal assistance** to persons seeking **protection in Poland.**

## Introduction

The past year at the Halina Nieć Legal Aid Center was, in many ways, a breakthrough year. Never before have we worked so intensively, provided such a high volume of legal consultations, and assisted such a large number of individuals seeking protection in Poland.

Our operations have never been so wide-ranging, with a record number of legal aid points established in major Polish cities, and we've never conducted so many outreach visits and consultations in refugee centers and guarded facilities for foreigners.

Unfortunately, this exceptionally demanding level of activity reflected the ever-growing needs of the affected populations, associated with the influx of individuals fleeing war and persecution to Poland. Poland, like the rest of the EU, experienced record numbers of asylum seekers.

We hope that our support has helped these individuals regulate their legal status and, in the long term, contributed to improving the enforcement of their human rights and facilitating their integration in Poland.





# 2024 in numbers

- 13,131** Persons received legal assistance
- 12,516** Refugees from Ukraine
- 615** Persons seeking international protection
- 17** Lawyers
- 11** Legal Aid Points
- 7** Cities



## HNLAC HISTORY 2002 – 2024

The Halina Nieć Legal Aid Center, (HNLAC) is a non-profit non-governmental organisation established in 2002 in Cracow. HNLAC's main objective is to protect human rights by providing free legal counsel to persons at risk of social exclusion and discrimination, including asylum seekers, refugees and the stateless. During the past 23 years of its existence the HNLAC provided free legal aid to over 51 000 persons!

Apart from providing free legal aid, the HNLAC also carries out regular monitoring of the adherence to standards of human rights undertakes legal interventions and advocacy activities, and pursues research and educational projects.

The HNLAC cooperates with many partners, first and foremost with the UNHCR Representation in Poland. The HNLAC is UNHCR's implementing partner in Poland since 2003.

The HNLAC is also a part of Multicultural Centre in Krakow cooperating with Internationaler Bund Polska and other NGOs in Krakow. Moreover, the HNLAC cooperates with the International Rescue Committee, La Strada Foundation against Trafficking in Persons and Slavery and the European Network on Statelessness (ENS).



# Programs implemented in 2024

The legal support provided by the Halina Nieć Legal Aid Center is extended to foreigners seeking protection, regardless of their citizenship, nationality, political views, or religion. Our actions were carried out through two parallel legal aid programs:

## 1. LEGAL AID PROGRAM FOR FOREIGNERS SEEKING PROTECTION IN POLAND

Under this program, which has been implemented by the Center for **23 years**, we provided free legal information and **legal assistance to foreigners residing in open refugee centers as well as those detained in guarded centers for foreigners**. Assistance to asylum seekers was provided through individual, in-person consultations, as well as via telephone, email, and video consultations. The program covered **4 open centers and 4 closed centers where regular missions were organized**. A significant group of individuals who benefited from our support in this program were those **who arrived in Poland through the Belarusian border and often were victims of violence**.

## 2. LEGAL AID PROGRAM FOR REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE

Under this program, we provided free information and legal assistance tailored to the specific needs of **persons who arrived in Poland from Ukraine due to the war** and were granted temporary protection. The program was implemented by a team of **Ukrainian and Russian-speaking lawyers** operating in **11 Legal Aid Points in 7 cities**. Additionally, legal assistance was provided through a special **Ukrainian legal helpline**. A special legal support program was implemented for Ukrainian children and individuals with specific needs.





# Lawyers on the move

***In addition to running stationary Legal Aid Points in 7 cities in Poland, HNLAC also deploys mobile legal teams to reach beneficiaries in detention and refugee centers.***

**In 2024, we conducted 51 missions to 4 detention centers**, where our lawyers provided ongoing legal assistance to foreigners seeking international protection in Poland. Legal assistance focused on refugee procedure and detention proceedings. Facilities regularly visited by HNLAC lawyers included: the Guarded Centers in **Krosno Odrzańskie, Lesznowola, Przemyśl, and Kętrzyn.**

Overall we conducted **33 missions to 4 open centers for asylum seekers.** In the past year, we visited facilities such as the **Open Center in Dębak, Linin, Grupa/Grudziądz, Białystok.**

Throughout 2024 **our lawyers managed to conduct a total of 84 missions!** This is our absolute record so far!

51

**missions to 4 detention centers**

33

**missions to 4 open centers**

## OUR BENEFICIARIES

The number of missions carried out in 2024 along with our geographical coverage and mobility are the defining features of our organization. Another important indicator of our work is however also the number of individuals who benefited from our legal assistance. In 2024, HNLAC lawyers provided support to **615 persons residing in open centers for refugees and migration detention facilities.**

# Legal Aid Points for Refugees from Ukraine

In response to the need to expand our activities and improve our reach to individuals in need of legal consultation due to the war in Ukraine, the HNLAC established **Legal Aid Points for refugees from Ukraine in various cities across the country.**

Currently, our organization operates **11 such points** where individuals who arrived in Poland from Ukraine due to the war can seek legal assistance.

In 2024, our Legal Aid Points for Ukrainian citizens operated in **7 different cities: Krakow, Poznan, Rybnik, Katowice, Wroclaw, Sopot, and Rzeszow.**

Our team of lawyers providing advice at these points consists of **9 persons.** All employed individuals are **Ukrainian lawyers**, some of whom arrived in Poland due to war, being refugees themselves. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to work with them. Employing Ukrainian lawyers also allows us to better understand the needs of our Ukrainian beneficiaries and tailor our actions accordingly.

In 2024, we managed to provide in-person legal consultations to **13,131 persons from Ukraine!**



## PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

While providing legal assistance, HNLAC lawyers pay attention to individuals with special needs, including minors (including unaccompanied minors), elderly persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, single mothers, large families, and victims of violence.

To better assist such individuals and provide them with comprehensive support, the HNLAC team has created its own Standard Operating Procedures and internal guidelines for identifying individuals with special needs and assessing their needs, followed by procedures for handling such cases to ensure the best possible support.

Additionally, Center lawyers have developed a special system for referring cases to appropriate organizations and support institutions that provide assistance beyond the scope of the Center, aiming to improve cooperation among various support entities.





# Legal Helpline for Refugees from Ukraine

In response to the high demand for quick and easily accessible legal consultations regarding the status and rights of **refugees from Ukraine** and matters related to **Temporary Protection** in Poland, the HNLAC established a special **Legal Helpline (+48 725 449 374)**.

In 2024 the helpline lawyer provided a total of **2,656 legal consultations which is our record so far!**

Legal consultations were also rendered via email and WhatsApp.

 **2,656** Legal Helpline consultations

## OUR PARTNERSHIPS

Similar to previous years, in 2024, our activities were carried out as a **legal partner of UNHCR**. This is our longest and most important partnership, dating back to 2003!

HNLAC was actively cooperating with UNHCR within the **Protection Sector**, and coordinating assistance for refugees from Ukraine in Poland. The overwhelming majority of our operational budget came from UNHCR funds.

We also conducted a project focusing on individuals with special needs in partnership with **International Rescue Committee** and continued activities stemming from membership in **European Network on Statelessness**.

 @cpphn

 @cpphn

 @cpphn

 [www.pomocprawna.org](http://www.pomocprawna.org)

# OUR NEEDS IN 2025

2025 marks yet another year of **humanitarian response to refugees from Ukraine** in Poland and **heightened protection needs along the Polish-Belarusian border**. Nearly a **million people** from Ukraine are currently registered in Poland as Temporary Protection beneficiaries and due to their status they are in need of tailored legal assistance, protection-driven and provided free of charge by professionals able to communicate in their language.

Numerous groups of foreigners seeking international protection continue to arrive through the **Polish-Belarusian border**, the number of asylum applications remains high, with a still very high proportion of individuals being detained and a low recognition rate.

In order to provide adequate response to our beneficiaries' protection needs, we need to maintain a **strong and well-trained and dedicated legal team** which is the cornerstone of all our work for refugees in Poland. Ensuring continuity of funding is thus of utmost importance. Our goal is to ensure that our assistance brings about real change in the lives of our beneficiaries.

At the same time, as a result of global challenges and growing humanitarian needs linked with universal peace deficit, we are expecting a **significant decrease in financial support from the UN and large international organizations for assistance in our region**. Therefore, in the face of the still-growing demand for our legal aid, we must intensively seek additional financial resources for its implementation.

For this reason, we greatly rely on the support of our Friends and Supporters. You can show your support in several ways:



Please allocate **1.5% of your tax** to us during your annual PIT settlement. Simply enter the name of our organization: Halina Nieć Legal Aid Center and the KRS number: **0000113676**.



Please **join our Patrons on Patronite**. Even a small but regular contribution will greatly improve our financial security.



We also encourage you to donate to our **fundraiser, that will support our long-term sustainability** and continue our legal aid to refugees in Poland.



Thank you for your interest in our activities, we really appreciate all your support!



# OUR PLANS FOR 2025



In 2025, due to the high demand for further legal assistance, proven by consistently high numbers of beneficiaries recorded, the HNLAC intends to **continue its core activities related to providing legal support to asylum seekers and stateless persons as well as refugees from Ukraine in Poland.**

In the case of asylum seekers, the HNLAC plans to focus on **ensuring access to legal assistance for asylum seekers in various remote facilities** in Poland.

Another goal is to **limit the use of detention and its length, particularly in case of vulnerable persons.** Currently, as a result of insufficient identification, many highly vulnerable persons, including victims of violence are staying in guarded centers for foreigners. To remedy this, legal action in individual cases as well as systemic changes need to be made.

**Detention of foreigners is still lengthy** and often applied without proper assessment of individual circumstances whereas alternatives to detention are still used only scarcely.

As the situation along the fence on the Polish-Belarussian border is still precarious, the HNLAC will advance its **advocacy efforts** towards amending the applicable laws to ensure their consistency with international human rights standards, especially the non-refoulement principle. HNLAC also plans to roll out its new **strategic litigation program** and a **training program for students of law.**

Taking into account the **situation in Ukraine** and the current trends related to the influx of refugees, the HNLAC also anticipates the **further need to run the existing points providing legal assistance tailored to this group of beneficiaries.**

The HNLAC plans to place **greater emphasis on supporting vulnerable persons from Ukraine**, including persons in a difficult mental state associated with prolonged war, unemployed and economically disadvantaged, as well as persons with disabilities, the elderly and victims of violence. The HNLAC will further work on strengthening referrals for persons at risk, forging cooperation with key stakeholders and working towards adopting a national referral system.

Following its efforts from previous years The HNLAC is also looking for **core-funding on an ongoing basis** in order to ensure financial stability of its increased team and resources. Securing the long-term retention of staff is a key element to sustainability of HNLAC services to its beneficiaries.

## CONTACT:

Katarzyna Przybysławska – President  
e-mail: przybyslawska@pomocprawna.org  
tel. +48 607 041 008

