

2017

**EUROPEAN LEGAL RESEARCH &  
TRAINING NETWORK**

**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ANNUAL ACTIVITY:  
2016-2017**



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*' We will do all we can to help you succeed, but membership must be earned. How far you proceed along the road towards European Integration, and how fast, will be up to you"*

*- Chris Patten*

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*'We don't find professionals. We create them'.*



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## FOREWORD

European was established in 2016 and immediately started its activities towards contributing to the development and professional growth of lawyers in the Western Balkan region, after a realization that young professionals were in deep professional hunger in terms of skills and qualities, but also attitudes and behaviours that would help them to act, think and behave as true European lawyers.

In 2016, across the region, European Legal witnessed a situation in which many young lawyers suffered from lack of professionalism and lack of a clear structure and mechanism that would help and assist them harmonize their levels to the required by the EU standards.

Despite their good intention to improve their situation, they were lost and confused in terms of what and how to invest in their professional future. Therefore, the first activities the organization provided was open discussions and round tables in which important issues regarding their professional path, identity and investment were discussed.

The aim of these first hand, first hand activities, was to understand the needs and issues the lawyers in the Western Balkans struggle with daily and discuss ways in which they can be tackled and solved in the future. The interest of participation in these events has been growing since then in each one of the countries where the organisation currently operates (Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Bosnia).

European Legal follows a multi-layered approach in terms of professional needs among lawyers, according to which not only skills and quality improvement strictly attached to the functioning of the legal profession is touched and focused upon, but also the professional attitude and behaviour as well as mindset and mentality around the entire functioning of the legal profession and the place and role lawyers play in it.

### *.... IN BRIEF*

European Legal is a non-profit organization governed by the provisions of Dutch and European law relating to such organizations. In terms of the mission, activities and level of action, it is a unique association targeted at young professionals and early career lawyers from across Western Balkan countries.

European Legal promotes training programmes with a genuine European dimension for lawyers willing and wishing to invest in their professional future and assist them to gradually grow. Even though with a short existence, European Legal has brought a range of innovative activities and concepts among lawyers in the Balkans, helping them to improve their current professional state.

European Legal brings value and innovation among lawyers, mainly through professional training in line with the norms, principles, and values upon the profession itself exists and is built upon, through its network of Members, distinctive training methodologies, cooperation with other organizations and EU institutions, and judicial networks and associations.

The objective of the organization is to offer training, motivation, and networking opportunities to at least 2000 lawyers a year across the Balkan countries, as well as encourage, involve, and enable half of the early career lawyers in the region to participate in training activities by 2020.

The capacity of European Legal to play an active role and to coordinate its programme of activities is made possible thanks to several driving forces. Based on a good structure of planning and execution, European Legal can rely on the mobilisation of all of its Members to provide the relevant expertise and active participation necessary to develop its offer of training activities.

The implementation and results of European Legal annual programme of training activities have been closely scrutinised, and it is with great pleasure that several key achievements have been obtained and shared during the 2016-2017 in each one of the Western Balkan countries.



## VISION - MISSION - GOALS

The legal profession plays an important role that is fundamental to any democracy, which in turn means that its proper functioning depends upon the quality and functioning of the legal professionals on a national level. European Legal Research & Training Network places high professionalism in all its meaning at the core of the functioning of lawyers from any profile and background, and daily strive to maintain it through training & capacity building, legal awareness campaigns and networking, motivation and coaching and other.

### WHAT?

- Introduce and promote high professionalism in line with the EU values & principles
- Adjust and reshape the professional mentality among lawyers in the Western Balkans
- Increase legal awareness on the main issues and the importance of tackling them now
- Promote and encourage professional acting, thinking, and behaving in line with EU
- Encouraging lawyers to develop and be active, involved in their national legal system
- Support and enhance a professional mindset that serves their further development

### HOW?

- By conducting analysis on the most current and important issues among lawyers
- By regular, face to face and ongoing training of young professionals in WB
- By creating a Professional Networking Platform in the region among them
- By introducing new concepts, tools, and innovative mechanism to help them
- By involving lawyers within the activities of this organization, nationally & regionally
- By encouraging them to act and speak on causes important to their profession

### WHY?

- The need to integrate lawyers of all areas at an early stage of the integration process
- The need to involve them within the improvement, and reshaping of the legal system
- The need to bring back the lost professional identity and dignity among them

- The need to adjust the professional mentality and mindset among lawyers
- The need to support a work culture where constant professional investment is crucial

## ACTORS

The presence of European Legal in the Western Balkans is already a fact. In only two years of its existence the organization has rapidly grown and established its presence in at least four of the six countries of the region not only through events and activities organized for lawyers there, but also through representation, working groups and advisory boards in each one of these countries.

As we continue to expand, the number of lawyers, part of our network in each country and regionally is growing as well as our members, partners and collaborations with other entities that share the same mission and vision as ours.

### *Representation in Western Balkans*

The office representation within European Legal has been established in four countries as we currently look forward to expanding in the other two other countries left within the Western Balkan region.

The idea of having a representation in each country in WB is a must not only related to technical procedures there, but mainly because for an international operating organization would be difficult to do work on the ground without a representation structure which can work on the ground.

### *Boards & working groups*

The working boards or committees – are to be formed and chosen group of lawyers in each country that want to contribute to their professional growth through involvement within European Legal. The aim of such groups is to closely work with the representation in drafting policies, preparing project proposals, working on event and activities, by mainly getting directly involved in them as organizers, speakers, planners and so forth.

Their functions are divided per area such as soft skills, behaviour, and attitude, motivation and coaching as well as based on the activity group they mostly are interested to participate and contribute: RESEARCH - TRAINING - NETWORKING.

### *Members*

European legal constantly presents these young lawyers with opportunities to act as part of the organization on national level but also represent it in other countries in the region, and during the organized events there. The aim of this is to empower and encourage young professionals to immediately get involved in practice and experience the skills and qualities they learn in theory on a regular basis.

The membership (s) we as organization provide for the lawyers, have the same goal, which is to increase the level of involvement and encourage lawyers to express themselves in every event that we organize. At European Legal a member is not a number, but a voice.

### *Trainers & experts*

European legal is an organization entirely dedicated to lawyers and to creating opportunities and possibilities for them to grow and improve in the early stage of the integration process. While this is a great mission, the crucial part of it is getting lawyers involved not only on a national but also regional basis.

We as organization stay firm to the principle that says: 'If you want to see a lawyer succeed, give him/her an opportunity to show and reveal their potential', a rule we have been following since the beginning of our activities. Believing that lawyers in the region have a great potential and will to improve themselves, we encourage them to get involved in any of the areas they feel confident and strong about.

Currently, our trainers and experts are mainly from the EU law and international law areas, specialized mainly in EU integration issues, and subtopics related to that chapters 23 and 24 as crucial parts of the rule of law and democracy maintenance. As we move forward, and the network of lawyers grows in the region, our goal is to broaden and also enrich the trainings and expert capacities within the organization and abroad.

## ACTIVITIES 2016 -2017

European Legal is a non-profit organization, which means its activities have been mainly funded by EU grants and projects. However, in the short time of its existence, this organization has not been passive in terms of activities and achievements, even when the finances have been limited.

During the first years – 2016 European legal has organized at least three activities including Albania, Kosovo, and Macedonia, with the aim to bring lawyers together and share their concerns in terms of professional skills and qualities, their needs, and the way they perceive their profession and the role and place in it.

Mainly through round tables and open discussion, combining academical viewpoints, practical issues and EU standards and expectations in terms of where they should be – have been the main points on the agenda. The main goal we have achieved is set the first step to understand what the situation is in each one of the countries in relation of their professional situation and prepare the necessary habitat for lawyers to be able to express themselves, gain a positive and enthused approach and a clear understanding of their profession.

The result at the end of these events has been very satisfactory regarding the increased interest in getting involved and investing in the profession and entire legal system in their countries.

## TOPIC TABLE

| <i>Name of event</i>                    | <i>Country</i> | <i>Date</i>           |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| <i>The rocky road to EU integration</i> | <i>Kosovo</i>  | <i>4 – 5 May 2016</i> |



|                                                                          |                  |                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Fostering our European identity as lawyers</i>                        | <i>Albania</i>   | <i>11-12 May 2016</i>       |
| <i>Integration of the legal profession and the role of lawyers in it</i> | <i>Macedonia</i> | <i>20-22 September 2016</i> |
| <i>Lawyers in search of their professional identity</i>                  | <i>Albania</i>   | <i>10-12 March 2017</i>     |

## ALBANIA

*Topic: Lawyers in search of their professional identity:  
EU standards is the only way ahead*

### *Overview and description*

During the first events in Albania, we as organization were faced with an overall sceptical and passive attitude among lawyers in terms of their profession but also the entire legal system in the country. Partly due to the poor and weak academic system but also due to their perception about their role as mainly service providers within such systems, lawyers showed a resistance in terms of the levels of professionalism and investment needed for their further growth.

However, lawyers have been very open minded and welcomed the facts and the reality about their current situation and have expressed their concern in relation to the right structure and path they need to follow to change things. Even though during the very first event, lawyers were confronted with a realistic view in regard of the needs and urgency of issues they face, they all agreed that it was time they face the truth and start making a change.

European Legal recognizes the importance of feedback from lawyers after each training. Therefore, during all events in Albania, lawyers were provided a three-part questionnaire, comprised with questions about their interest and main issues they face in the daily practice as lawyers, divided into three main areas: - Development, improvement, and capacity building - Professional behaviour and attitude of the legal profession - Understanding and interpretation of national and EU laws.

Most of the participants accept the fact that the legal profession in the region is in crisis and according to their view the main reason for that is lack of professionalism, skills and qualities, and an overall wrong mentality and mindset about their place within their

profession. Acknowledgment of the situation and understanding how complicated the issues are around their profession was in this context a great start to act in changing the situation.

## KOSOVO

*Topic: The rocky road to EU integration*

### *Overview and description*

Kosovar lawyers have shown a great interest to grow and improve themselves in the future and their participation to our events has been always high. During the first event in Kosovo, topics such as the importance of integrating ourselves in the EU and the reason integration for them as professional is crucial and decisive of their future, together with the fact that such process should start now, were brought forward, and discussed.

Despite the slightly passive behaviour but also language barriers among young professionals there, the will and desire to improve and grow professionally was very present and real. The participation in this training, had elements of interest from a broader range of lawyers than the ones the training was planned for. In terms of the topic and structure of the training, there was high interest from graduate lawyers and students from different law schools in Kosovo.

All participants showed involvement, interaction, and desire to learn in all parts of the topics, related to the EU standards regarding the functioning of the legal profession, rules and principles, norms and regulations related to its functioning and consequently, their place within the legal profession.

During the training, the interaction, questions, and activity level from the lawyers was lower due to their hesitation to ask questions and fear of expressing wrong ideas, a behaviour commonly known as hesitation among lawyers in all countries of the region. However, their potential and capacity to understand complicated issues and analyse them, think together

with the trainers, raise the right questions and ability to distinguish the main gaps within a raised problem, was above average.

## MACEDONIA

*Topic: The future of the legal profession and our role in it*

### *Overview and description*

A society cannot survive without a strong and effective legal system, which consists among others of a proper and functional legal profession, built upon principles and values, standards and behaviours, which when attached to the exercising of such profession decides the quality of its functioning. The way and extent these set of values, skills, qualities, attitudes, and behaviours are put into practice, their right or wrong usage, their proper practice and their consistent implementation decides also if we have a well-regulated legal profession.

Lawyers in Macedonia were all aware of such issues and their complication, however during the events there, they came to more clarity on how to tackle them. The exercise of the legal profession and the concept of professionalism as interchangeable shaping but also building the functioning of the legal profession, has been at the core of the trainings and workshops provided by lawyers there.

Furthermore, the importance of high professional skills and qualities as the A and B of the legal profession and the fact that more investment and growth is required regarding the EU laws and procedures, was discussed, and analysed as well as the importance of the mission lawyers should fulfil in their daily practices. During the questionnaires provided to them, lack of orientation and clear structure on how to achieve that goal was stated as one of the main issues among young professionals.

Therefore, European Legal has brought an innovative approach during its events in each one of the countries, in which after every training motivation is provided to lawyers as a necessary tool to keep them enthused and encourage them to maintain their goals and aims high but also find and create ways and opportunities through which they can achieve them.

## STATE OF AFFAIRS

Introducing a new organization in countries where legal professionals are commonly passive has been for European Legal the first confrontation with the situation regarding the legal professionals in these countries and at the same time our first attempt to get in touch with them. Furthermore, listening to their concerns has been a great way to get closer to their situation and try to understand where their biggest problem lies.

During our first introduction in 2016 in Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia, we have discussed about the integration of the legal profession, how can they foster their European identity and get unstuck of their current situation. With the help of various surveys prepared specially for young professionals in these countries we had a first glimpse into their main challenges related to their functioning as lawyers and learn about their goals, ambitions as well as expectations from us as organization.

We have not only provided trainings and other activities among lawyers but also brought innovative approaches and tool they can use to improve and grow professionally. Introducing new mechanisms which are already being used in the other states of the EU and abroad for many years such as motivation, coaching and mentoring has been a great way to bring an impact within the region through a different approach

In all our attempts and work, we as organization place lawyers at the centre of the attention and are confident that they are on the right path towards their improvement as professionals. For us as organization it has been very important to bring the right and the real message among these lawyers, from the first moment of contact with them.

At the same time, we continue to write and speak about legal issues, and the problems regarding the legal profession throughout our website [www.legislationnet.com](http://www.legislationnet.com) and on our YouTube channel Legally European. This way we are not only aiming to become present in their daily lives throughout the topics we discuss, but also motivate and invite these young professionals to increase their work and impact within their profession and legal system.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Ø *To candidate states and their institutions*

- Invest in the academic system and enable lawyers to follow internships, courses, practice exchange at an early stage of their involvement with the goal of gaining professional knowledge.
- Provide them with clear, deep information on the EU process, standards, and conditionality not just in terms of the country's integration but also on their involvement as lawyers within the entire process
- Place lawyers under responsibility through requirements to grow, improve and develop themselves daily and regularly to get involved, to participate in causes and activities as students
- Assist and help them to implement their knowledge through on job trainings and internships on a national and regional level
- Encourage networking events and exchange of experiences among lawyers on national and regional level as well.

### Ø *To lawyers aspiring to become European lawyers*

- Increase their interest on learning about the role and place and their importance within the legal profession and entire legal system in the WB countries

- Seek and demand answers from authorities, other lawyers, academics and so forth and use the information in their benefit
- Express their opinion and reflections through legal writing, debates, analysis, and research on all issues involved in their profession and its practicing
- Develop a positive mindset and remove the negative mentality around themselves and the profession, by understanding its cause and mission
- Find the purpose behind the legal profession and define their function and main goal to be achieved in it