

# Refugee Law Clinic Gießen



JUSTUS-LIEBIG-  
UNIVERSITÄT  
GIESSEN

## Training Program related to practice at the JLU Faculty of Law

The Refugee Law Clinic (RLC) was founded in the winter term 2007/08 and has made clinical legal education accessible to students in Germany for the first time. Law Clinics exist mostly in the Anglo-American law education system at many universities.

### The Law Clinic Training strategy involves 3 main points:

- Students improve their knowledge in a special subject during their studies.
- The training and mentorship is carried out by university lecturers and by practitioners.
- The collegiate members use their gained knowledge practically by guidance, for example within the scope of consultations.

### The Refugee Law Clinic in Gießen

The Refugee Law Clinic Gießen has chosen asylum and refugee law as their special subject. The background for this decision is that the Hessische Erstaufnahmeeinrichtung (Reception Center) for refugees (HEAE) is located in Gießen, where the asylum seekers are accommodated at the beginning of their asylum proceeding. Because of this fact and the complexity of the German asylum proceedings, there is a high demand for qualified consultations. Furthermore, asylum seekers often cannot afford a lawyer to represent them in their proceedings. In these proceedings the students of the RLC provide an important and high-quality contribution to improve the access to judicial consultations for asylum seekers.

The RLC is overseen by the professor for Public Law, Public International Law and European Law, Prof. Dr. Thilo Marauhn. It is also supervised by its initiator Prof. Dr. Paul Tiedemann, a judge at the Administrative Court in Frankfurt and by Dr. Stephan Hocks, a lawyer for asylum and refugee law in Frankfurt. Also, the program is overseen and coordinated by the academic assistants Janina Giesecking and Laura Hilb and the collegiate assistant Jennifer Weinel and Lisanne Hamschmidt.

### Course Training by the RLC

The training program usually starts in the winter term with a lecture on „German, European and International refugee law“, which is held by Prof. Dr. Paul Tiedemann. The focus of the lecture is mainly material refugee law including the nexus with human rights law and asylum procedure law, as well as the methods to determine and present the facts. Over the winter break, there is the first practical season, in which the students have the possibility to complete an internship at a law office that focuses on asylum law and the right of residence. There are also options to do the practical course with public authorities, such as the Federal Office of Migration and Refugees, as well as in chosen Non-Governmental Organizations, for example German Red Cross. These practical courses are structured and arranged by the RLC. The students will research and write a term paper regarding a case based on asylum law during their summer term. Furthermore, during this term, the interdisciplinary colloquium (with external referees) takes place. This is conducted by Janina Giesecking. The topics relate to migration and political problems with asylum law. The referees often include UNHCR, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Pro Asyl and also doctors, psychologists and social scientists.

Since summer term of 2011 Dr. Stephan Hocks offers a tutorial regarding asylum cases in practical consultations. In this tutorial, students simulate the consultation situation as well as exercise the methods to research information about countries of origin.

All members of RLC, both beginners and advanced learners, work together in a team, where they reflect on their work and discuss new developments, necessities and demands.

### The practical experience with consultation

RLC did not establish its own consultation office, but cooperates with consultations for refugees by

the Evangelical Church Gießen which has an office in the Reception Center. Access to the consultation ideally starts in the summer term because students are motivated and interested in gaining new experiences after the first practical course. Novices are supposed to attend consultations carried out by professional consultants. Subsequently, every consultation will be discussed in detail. Step-by-step, the students take over parts of the consulting conversation until they are able to do it on their own.

RLC usually advises asylum seekers who live in the HEAE and unaccompanied underage refugees (Unaccompanied Minors, UM).

### **The consultation of asylum seekers who live in the HEAE**

The students provide consultations for groups in the HEAE. These consultations should be understood as only an introduction to the basic information and function to help the asylum seekers to understand the asylum procedure. Such a consultation is necessary because of the huge importance of the hearing at the Federal Office for migration and refugees. After that, it is possible to make an appointment for one-on-one interviews, in which the refugees have the possibility to talk about their individual flight. The aim of these group consultations and especially the one-on-one interviews is to prepare the refugees for the hearing at the Federal Office of Migration and Refugees.

### **Consultations of Unaccompanied Minors**

In doing this, the students objective is to explain appropriately to children the importance of the asylum proceedings as well as the importance of the hearing at the Federal Office. Afterwards, this interview will be discussed in detail to make the juveniles feel prepared for the process. We also re-examine the reasons for their flight and the ways they left their country of origin, if the juveniles wish to do so.

### **Quality assurance**

The consultation by the students is generally carried out under guidance by the training supervisors who can help the students if they have any questions. Every student who takes an active part in the consultations is obliged to participate in the law supervisions which takes place regularly. In these supervisions the students comprehensively discuss the cases they are working on, under the direction of Dr. Stephan Hocks.

Additionally, there is an offer of psychological supervision to the students, which takes place at intervals of 2 months.

### **Aims and Outlook**

RLC offers a substantiated training program regarding asylum and refugee law to the students. It also enables an intensive cooperation with practitioners and qualifies students to advise asylum seekers in their asylum proceedings during their studies. Even more, RLC is conducive to improving the offer for consultation of refugees. From this, the students accomplish important input for our society. Regarding public events, RLC tries to improve the level of information relating to the theme of „migration, persecution and asylum“ and to promote public discussion.

With every new class, the project improves and discovers new duties and lines of action. The firm basis is the theoretical foundation regarding asylum and refugee law.

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