

In March 2023, the EUAA organised a Thematic Workshop on Legal Assistance and Representation in the Asylum Procedure. Key stakeholders, including lawyers and civil society organisations, participated to share knowledge, good practices and challenges in the functioning of the Common European Asylum System.

The following article is based on a presentation given at the event.

Professional Training in the Field of European Asylum and Migration Law Offered by the Academy of European Law (ERA)

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1. The profile of ERA

The Academy of European Law (ERA) was established in March 1992 to respond to the rapid pace of European integration during the late 1980s and 1990s. With the Single European Act in 1986 and the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, the scope of European legislation became wider than ever before. It was clear that lawyers, judges and other legal practitioners at all levels and in almost all fields of law would need regular training and a forum for debate in order to keep up to date with the latest developments. In 1990, the European Parliament recommended that the European Commission invest in a centre for continued education for lawyers in order to improve the application of European law. It is worth noting that the first regular conference organised by ERA on 12 March 1992 concerned European asylum and immigration law.

In 2022, ERA, a public, not-for profit foundation headquartered in Trier, Germany, celebrated its 30th anniversary. Its patrons have each made a fixed capital contribution and most are represented on the Governing Board of the Academy.¹

The task of the academy is to enable individuals and authorities involved in the application and implementation of European law in Member States and other European states to gain a wider knowledge of European law, in particular European Union (EU) law and its application, and to foster mutual and comprehensive exchanges of experiences. The academy pursues

¹ ERA's patrons are all EU Member States, the United Kingdom, the Federal State of Rhineland-Palatinate, Scotland, the 16 German Federal States, the City of Trier and Sparkasse Trier Bank.. ERA often organises courses and conferences for its patrons, both in Trier and across Europe.



this objective by organising courses, conferences, seminars and specialist symposia, particularly for the purpose of continued vocational training, by issuing publications and by providing a forum for discussions. European asylum and migration law belongs to one of the main legal fields covered in ERA's annual training activities.

ERA staff is currently composed of 74 employees of 16 different nationalities. The programme department of ERA employs 15 lawyers, distributed between four sections, with asylum and migration law falling within the remit of the European Public Law section.

ERA events take place at the ERA Congress Centre (ECC) in Trier, in Brussels and all over Europe. The academy has a specialised library that includes publications on all areas of community law from both the European and national perspectives. Since 1999, it has served as a European Documentation Centre with an up-to-date archive of most official EU publications in English, French and German.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, ERA has become a full-scale provider of distance-learning in the form of online seminars and hybrid conferences. It had already developed considerable experience in previous years in producing e-learning programmes and digital resources designed to leave a durable legacy from its live programmes.

2. Distinctive features of ERA

2.1. Target groups

ERA's target group is composed of nearly **all legal professions** from both the public and private sectors, including in-house counsel, judges and prosecutors, law enforcement officers, lawyers in private practice, national civil servants, staff of EU institutions, and journalists. Civil servants, public prosecutors and judges from the academy's patrons enjoy a discount on participation in ERA activities. Certain reductions are also possible for young lawyers and other groups such as full-time staff of universities or comparable academic institutions and staff of charitable organisations.

2.2. Member of the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN)

ERA is the only EJTN member with a specifically *European mission*. The EJTN as such is the principal platform and promoter of training and exchange of knowledge of the European judiciary. The EJTN develops training standards and curricula, coordinates judicial training exchanges and programmes, disseminates training expertise and promotes cooperation between EU judicial training institutions. Members are national judicial training institutions from all EU Member States and ERA.

ERA has established close links to the judicial training organisations in Member States and candidate countries. ERA was involved in the creation of the EJTN and a founding member. In March 2001, the first EJTN General Assembly in Stockholm appointed ERA to the Secretariat of the Network. In June 2022, ERA was re-elected to the Steering Committee of the European Judicial Training Network and as Convenor of its Programmes Working Group.





2.3. Speakers and programmes

Speakers at ERA events are drawn from a European network of experts, leading professionals and lawmakers. ERA regularly welcomes judges from the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) or the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) as speakers, as well as high-ranking EU officials.

Beyond the events provided as part of its open programme, ERA organises courses and seminars on request on a range of aspects of European law and also provides in-house training.

ERA's training is designed from a European perspective but sometimes in cooperation with national bodies, such as bar associations or judicial schools. Some training courses are offered in partnership with national bodies to complement national training activities.

2.4. A platform for discussion on legal policy

In line with its statute, ERA does not confine itself to the dissemination of European law through training but also serves as a European platform for discussions on legal policy. In so doing, ERA attaches great importance to remaining neutral and independent, for example, by not becoming directly involved in the drafting of specific legal policies. ERA's neutrality and independence have given it a role in a number of topical and fundamental debates at the European level. The aim of such events is to stimulate reflection on future political developments in a field of law or, where future legislation is already at an advanced stage, to put forward practical considerations from legal practitioners and stakeholders for the evaluation of the proposed legislation.

2.5. ERA Forum - Journal of the Academy of European Law

ERA publishes a quarterly legal journal – ERA Forum – in cooperation with Springer (Berlin/Heidelberg), which is composed of articles based on the most outstanding presentations delivered at ERA's conferences. The strong demand for the journal observed in recent years was maintained in 2022, with 164,656 articles downloaded in the course of the year, only slightly down from the record number registered in 2021.²

3. ERA's training activities in the field of asylum and migration law

As mentioned, the first regular conference on European asylum and immigration law took place in 1992. In subsequent years, a distinction was made between an annual conference on migration law covering legal migration aspects, such as family reunification, long-term residents and seasonal workers and an annual conference on asylum law. Since 2018, ERA has added to its training portfolio the EU labour migration law conference targeted mainly, but not exclusively, at immigration lawyers. This reflects the growing importance of EU legal

² ERA's Annual Report 2022, [25406.pdf \(era.int\)](#)



migration law which aims to attract workers from outside the EU due to shortages in the European labour market.

Currently, ERA's training portfolio in the field of asylum and migration is composed of four events each year and encompasses: the Annual Conference on European Asylum and Migration Law, the Annual Conference on European Immigration Law, Recent ECtHR Case Law in Asylum Matters and the Annual Conference on Border Management.³ All possible formats are applied in this regard, for example the Annual Conferences in 2023 are scheduled to take place in a hybrid format in Trier. The conference on Recent Case Law in Asylum Matters 2022 took place in Strasbourg and in 2023 it was organised online.

During the Annual Conference on Asylum and Migration 2023 scheduled for October 2023, topics to be discussed include the future of EU asylum law in the context of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, latest asylum trends in EU+ countries, implementation of the new mandate of the EU Asylum Agency and lessons learned, and the way forward in regard to temporary protection in Europe. In addition, discussions will focus on the role of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU in the asylum system, vulnerability in the context of applications for international protection, and the new national independent monitoring mechanisms for fundamental rights compliance at the EU's external borders and its intersection with the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Artificial intelligence at Schengen borders and its implications for people on the move will be addressed. The speakers will also tackle recent ECtHR and CJEU jurisprudence in asylum matters and challenges with refugee integration in receiving societies.

ERA's annual training programme – in terms of format and methodology – has undergone several changes over the last 2 years. The hybrid format will play an increasing role in ERA's annual programme. While the latter represented only 17% of training in 2022, approximately one-third of training sessions are offered in a hybrid format in 2023, with the other two-thirds spread equally between face-to-face and online-only training.⁴ Selected presentations of speakers – also on events related to asylum and migration law - are recorded, and in cooperation with speakers, e-Presentations are produced. These film recordings combined with embedded background documentation and a self-assessment quiz provide one way to prolong the life of ERA's live programmes in different online formats. In 2022, 49 new e-presentations dealing with specific and current issues of European law were produced, bringing the total catalogue to 679.

In order to foster discussions among various stakeholders working in the fields of asylum and migration, high-level speakers with diverse legal professional backgrounds are invited: including representatives of EU institutions, legal practitioners in private practice, judges and representatives from the judiciary acting at the EU and national levels, representatives of NGOs, academia and researchers, including experts from the EU Member States. In each programme, there are presentations, panel discussions and time slots for discussion with the audience. All courses offered so far in the field of asylum and migration law are advanced and

³ [25544.pdf \(era.int\)](#), [25017.pdf \(era.int\)](#), [25191.pdf \(era.int\)](#), [24577.pdf \(era.int\)](#).

⁴ ERA's Annual Report 2022, [25406.pdf \(era.int\)](#)



it's assumed that participants already have some knowledge in the field and seek an update on recent developments. It is likely that ERA's training portfolio in this regard will expand.

In 2022, ERA trained, during its open events, 3,581 participants (in total) of whom 18% were private practitioners, 16% EU officials, 9% ministry officials from EU Member States, 8% judges, 7% academics and 4% NGOs. The goal is to reach at least the same number of participants in 2023.

