From the left: From the left: Alan Taranis (Intern) and Zenel Hasanaj (Legal Officer)

Interview with: **ZENEL HASANAJ**
by: **ALAN TARANIS**

"In my opinion, a good legal officer or a good lawyer has to love his job. ... I chose with the greatest desire to work for FLAA and I am still very proud of my job here."

I am Alan Taranis, an intern of Justice Matters at the regional office of the Free Legal Aid Agency (FLAA) in Peja. Having worked under the supervision of Mr. Zenel Hasanaj, I have had the great opportunity to learn more about the importance of legal aid, but also the struggles of legal officers, especially during the pandemic. His willingness to deliver services, despite all the issues at hand, has

Zenel Hasanaj - Legal Officer

motivated me to give my best efforts in providing free legal services to anyone in need. Mr. Zenel's tireless work during these hectic days has made me realize the incredible contribution that the FLAA gives to those most in need. This has made me more aware of what is really important when one does his/her job, and I think it is important for every young lawyer to know this type of commitment. I am thankful l have had this opportunity to closely watch an inspiring process. Read the interview below to learn more from him.

1. What does Access to Justice mean to you?

Access to justice is very important to me and it is one of the reasons why I am working at the Free Legal Aid Agency. This job gives me the opportunity to assist people in accessing justice, and also allows me to further contribute to my professional development as a lawyer.

2. What are the biggest challenges that lawyers face at the beginning of their careers?

The biggest challenges for lawyers at the beginning of their career are the following: a) the first direct contact with clients and b) representation in court. The lack of practical learning opportunities during our legal studies is what makes the job more difficult. But with time and practical experience, difficulties disappear.

3. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of a good lawyer / legal officer at FLAA?

In my opinion, a good legal officer or a good lawyer has to love his job. If you love the job you do, you will always become better and more professional in drafting documents, decently protecting the interests of the client, complying with legal regulations and deadlines, etc.

Zenel and Alan at the regional office in Peja

4. Why did you choose the Free Legal Aid Agency as a job given the many other opportunities to work in the practice like a single lawyer?

I chose with the greatest desire to work for FLAA and I am still very proud of my job here. It is a humane job where we help the people who need it and who do not have the financial resources to hire a lawyer. Especially because we help them in cases when their rights are endangered or someone wants to deprive them of those rights. It is an honor and a privilege to work at the Free Legal Aid Agency because it is like urgent medical assistance provided to a patient, and I would suggest this job to every fresh-new lawyer to acquire the practice in this agency at the beginning of the career.

5. Does working in the Free Legal Aid Agency provide you with an opportunity for further professional and academic development?

Yes. Working at the Free Legal Aid Agency is a good advantage and offers you the opportunity to expand your professional horizon and learning. You have the chance to attend a lot of training, attend high-level meetings, and work directly with clients.

6. What are the biggest challenges or problems you face in working in the Free Legal Aid Office?

The biggest challenge in the work of the FLAA - Regional Office in Peja, is the lack of citizen's awareness regarding the existence of FLAA, lack of legal culture among the population who could potentially benefit from free legal aid. Another challenge is that our clients lack patience. They demand that their problem should be resolved as soon as possible, disregarding the fact that cases in Kosovo's courts take a very long time. This has also caused a loss of trust in justice institutions, including our office because our clients can not tell the difference between us and the courts.

7. How do you find the experience of working along with an intern?

The longer I work at the FLAA, the more I like humane and sublime work. I have the chance to train and mentor interns and guide them in their carries. This is one of the best professional experiences that every lawyer should have in his / her CV.

About this interview: *This interview was conducted by Justice Matters interns as part of a "listening" project: Interview with legal professionals. Justice Matters Activity is a three-year project to improve access to justice for all, inclusive of disadvantaged and marginalized groups, by strengthening the institutions, actors and processes for providing legal services and legal information.*