



Interview with: **NORA DOBRUNA** by: **MARIGONA SHKOZA**

"Working with clients has challenges of a different nature. It requires commitment, professionalism, and emotional stability to overcome the challenges of working with clients."

A piece of greenery, which has managed to survive the urbanism of recent years, can be seen from the windows of a small office located in the heart of the city of Gjakova. On the second floor of that same building, representing the spirit of the culture of this city, the House of Culture in Gjakova, people come every day to seek solutions to their problems. People with different problems and who, among other things, face economic and legal troubles. In this office, you see people who often just need to be heard by someone. Here, every day differs from the other. Every problem is not the same and every case requires a unique solution.

In that small office in Gjakova, where I first heard from court users, works a woman by the name of



Nora Dobruna - Legal Officer

Nora Dobruna. In her community, she has become a heroine whom everyone sees as a person who listens to them and has a solution for each of their problems. When you first enter that Free Legal Aid office, you will face the smile of a modest, simple woman, who greets you warmly and offers you an extraordinary reception, and you understand that you are exactly in the right place.

Nora has a big heart and has always loved her work. Therefore, you may notice that on the street, people often stop to greet her. As an intern, I have learned from her that not everyone will treat you well, but you always have to show your best side. She also taught me that being a lawyer means not only benefiting from the profession, but also giving back.

Therefore, I hope that this interview with Nora

Dobruna will provide you with the same valuable lessons as it did to me.

1. It has been many years since you started working in the regional office of the Free Legal Aid Agency. Can you tell us how you started working in this office?

I started working for the Agency in 2015. Working at the Free Legal Aid Agency has not been easy, despite my previous work experience. Adjusting to the environment, having good collegial relationships, and improving my job performance has been my primary focuses. It was a challenge until I had the chance to showcase my personal values accompanied by professional skills. Working with clients has challenges of a different nature. It requires commitment, professionalism, and emotional stability to overcome the challenges of working with clients. My mission is for my clients to succeed in their cases. The success of my clients is also my success. The categories of citizens who seek legal aid are usually faced with a lot of injustice. Therefore, I want to make sure I have their respect and that they are pleased with my services. I consider it to be an investment in my human and professional side. This is how I gained the energy to continue my daily work.

2. Can you recall and share with us some of the moments when you have felt most proud during your work at the Free Legal Aid Agency?

Proud? Yes, there are times when I feel that way. I remember a case when a client, who was referred to us by another client, did not believe that I could help him. I was able to gain his trust through communication and persistence. I was proud when the client came to thank me personally after he had won the case. He had lost faith that anyone could help him with his legal problem, let alone win the case. Another case that made me feel proud of my job is when a client visited me after many years and thanked me. She said, thanks to my legal aid services, that she could be near her children. This job comes with a lot of emotions, which are not recorded anywhere, but they are felt.



3. Why did you choose the profession of a lawyer, and if you could go back in time, would you choose another profession?

When I chose my profession, there were not many opportunities. Considering the circumstances, I believe that such a choice was inevitable for me. The '90s were about fighting for basic rights, starting with the right to life, freedom, and equality for all citizens. These social and political circumstances had a big influence on me to become a lawyer. Going back, it makes me realize that I would choose the same profession all over again. Now, I realize that the decision to become a lawyer has been the right one.

4. You used to work in a shelter. You still help women who come from shelters by offering them legal services. How do you feel when you help in these cases?

For more than 15 years I have helped shelters for women and girls who are victims of domestic violence in Gjakova. It is an extraordinary experience that has equipped me with the necessary skills to help me deal with cases of violence in legal aid work. Domestic violence is a multi-dimensional problem. Hence, there needs to be a holistic and sensitive approach with these clients. Given that our office is one of the main links of the chain and is very necessary for providing assistance, I consider that these cases are always treated with the utmost seriousness by us, hoping that the assistance that we provide makes their rehabilitation and reintegration into society easier.

5. How ready and prepared have you been to overcome this COVID-19 challenge which has become a worldwide topic in recent months? How challenging has it been for you to work during this time?

I have not been completely ready and prepared because this was a new situation for me. These are new circumstances all over the world. I have tried to adapt in order to successfully face this situation while being engaged in the work processes. In the beginning, it was quite unusual to maintain distance from people. We started working from home, meetings with management and colleagues are being held online, etc. Through technology, we were able to participate in online training and somehow start functioning as a community and as a society in general. In my opinion, this challenge gave us new opportunities, which I consider a personal advancement and an advancement of the entire society. Now we are having our training online and we can provide our services online.

6. What are your objectives as the officer in charge of the regional office in Gjakova, after the pandemic?

After the pandemic, my primary goal is to resume work where we left it and re-functionalize the institution. It is very important for me to never stop as long as I have such a responsibility. I believe that new approaches should be considered in the promotion of work and the use of technology to offer assistance to citizens. There is still a need for professional advancement, requiring different training not only in the field of justice but also in the psycho social field.

***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.*