Legal Experts Advisory Panel

The European network of fair trial defenders

Welcome Pack
Welcome to the Legal Experts Advisory Panel

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LEAP is coordinated by Fair Trials Europe, Fair Trials’ Brussels offices, with the financial support of the Justice Programme of the European Union.
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Who we are

The Legal Experts Advisory Panel (or LEAP) is Fair Trials’ European network of experts in criminal justice and human rights which works to promote fair trial rights in Europe. LEAP currently counts over 200 organisational members, covering all 28 EU Member States.

Originally funded by a European Commission project grant, LEAP has become a formal network and is now a unique and respected voice on criminal justice and human rights within Europe with over 200 members from all 28 EU Member States (“LEAP Members”). LEAP members include representatives from law firms, civil society organisations, and academic institutions. Other members may be appointed from outside these groups as and when necessary.

Law firms
Legal practitioners are in the front line of the fight to protect the right to a fair trial. Their first-hand experience in police stations, detention centres and courts is an invaluable tool to identify and challenge failures and abuses in the criminal justice system.

Academic institutions
Academics help analyse comparative trends and identify the gaps in existing frameworks. Their research work is key to inform legal changes. Academics also provide solid expertise into the legal trainings organised by Fair Trials.

Civil society organisations
Civil society organisations help to raise awareness about fair trial issues among the general public and advocate for change. They act as a watchdog against any backsliding on defence rights.
The LEAP Advisory Board

In October 2013, five years after the creation of LEAP, Fair Trials launched a consultation process to seek input from LEAP members on a new network structure intended to ensure that, as it continues to grow, LEAP still serves the needs of its members, of Fair Trials and of those whose rights its work aims to protect. The responses to the consultation confirmed support for the proposal of developing a LEAP Advisory Board, comprising 28 members representing each of the EU Member States as well as different LEAP constituencies – defence lawyers, NGOs and academics (“LEAP Advisory Board Members”).

The current LEAP Advisory Board comprises 28 members, each invited by Fair Trials to represent their jurisdiction on the LEAP Advisory Board for a period of two years. LEAP Advisory Board Members will be invited on the basis of their active involvement in both their field of expertise and in LEAP’s work and their willingness to contribute actively to LEAP activities.

You can find the complete list of LEAP Advisory Board Members here.

What we do

Through Fair Trials’ coordination, LEAP is able to offer an expert view on a broad range of EU criminal justice topics, while also boosting cooperation between human rights defenders in cross-border work. Concretely, we do this through a) information-sharing, b) regional initiatives, and c) national initiatives. These are detailed below.

Information-sharing

LEAP members have a wealth of expertise in criminal justice and human rights, which is crucial to both boost cooperation among the network and inform Fair Trials' work on fair trial rights. On the one hand, LEAP members can circulate information and queries related to fair trial rights to the whole network, through Fair Trials. This can be helpful for those members who seek a comparative perspective to enhance their work, be it research, campaigning, or casework.

If you have a query you wish to circulate to the network, please get in touch with Iva at iva.petkovic@fairtrials.net.
On the other hand, Fair Trials regularly surveys the LEAP network through surveys and ad hoc individual communication to inform much of its work. You will receive notifications and instructions on how to fill in the surveys via the email address you have provided to Fair Trials.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

At the regional level, LEAP works to inform the EU’s agenda on criminal justice by:

• providing input to proposed EU legislation and advocating for new measures to ensure fair trial standards are upheld and promoted;
• contributing to expert roundtable discussions with EU stakeholders, including EU officials and civil society representatives, to raise awareness of key fair trial issues in Europe;
• researching emerging challenges to fair trial rights in Europe;
• supporting selected litigation before the EU Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights to challenge legislation and practices that violate fair trial rights.

Working Group on the EU Court of Justice

EU Directives on procedural rights and EU legislation on cross-border criminal justice are increasingly putting national legislation and practices to test. In this context, the Court of Justice of the European Union is more and more often requested to interpret EU law and decide whether domestic norms and practices comply with EU standards on fair trial rights.

Given the importance of this judicial arena, at the LEAP Annual Conference in 2018 Fair Trials set up a small working group within LEAP to help guide our work trying to influence the jurisprudence on EU criminal law through the EU Court.

This Working Group will build on Fair Trials’ past efforts to address the EU Court, including through interventions in cases related to access to a lawyer (Beuze v. Belgium) and to the European Arrest Warrant (Prisacaru v. Belgium and Romania).
Working Group on the European Court of Human Rights

Although protected by the European Convention on Human Rights, the right to a fair trial remains one of the most violated across the 47 members of the Council of Europe. With nearly 10,000 judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) not executed by national governments, fair trial rights risk to be left without an effective protection.

As the main network of fair trial defenders in Europe, a group of LEAP members, led by Jaanus Tehver, last year decided to create a new Working Group whose aim is to advocate for the development of the jurisprudence of the European Court related to the rights contained in the EU’s criminal justice legislation, and to monitor and advocate for the improved implementation at the national level of regional court judgments related to the rights to liberty and fair trial.

JUSTICIA – LEAP’s Working Group of Human Rights Organisations

The JUSTICIA European Rights Network (JUSTICIA) is a network of leading civil society organisations from across Europe, mainly national-level civil liberties organisations, designed to help them cooperate and coordinate around the promotion of the right to a fair trial in Europe.

In June 2017, the members of JUSTICIA, many of whom were already LEAP members, decided to integrate the network into LEAP as a working group effective April 2018.

This working group allows LEAP to further build connections between the academic and practitioner LEAP members with national-level civil society and, in doing so, strengthen the ability of LEAP members effectively monitor and advocate for the protection of the right to a fair trial in Europe.

In 2017, the JUSTICIA European Rights Network engaged in research to analyse and document discrimination in European criminal justice systems, which is an issue that LEAP members have consistently highlighted in past LEAP Annual Surveys.
Working Group on Judicial Remedies

Whenever fair trial rights are violated, it is important that they can be restored. In criminal law, this is done through judicial remedies, which are ordered by a criminal court and may take the form of monetary compensation or even a re-trial. Even though judicial remedies are crucial to give teeth to fair trial rights, they are not always effective enough and do not always follow the considerable strengthening of procedural rights in recent years in Europe.

Against this background, this Working Group aims to examine the judicial remedies available in EU Member States for violations of procedural rights, particularly in the context of the implementation of the EU Directives, and to explore ways to bridge the gap between procedural rights on paper and judicial remedies in practice.

The coordination of the Working Group, which was established in 2016, is provided by Fair Trials and Vania Costa Ramos (LEAP Advisory Board member for Portugal), with Dr Dimitrios Giannoulopoulos (LEAP member for the UK and Greece) acting as Academic Advisor.
NATIONAL INITIATIVES

At the local level, LEAP pushes for the effective implementation of EU standards on fair trial rights through national initiatives which encompass a number of activities, including:

- researching domestic policies and practices which are supposed to give effect to fair trial rights;
- advocating for the respect of EU standards with national authorities, including through written submissions to parliaments regarding draft legislation;
- litigating cases which further domestic jurisprudence on fair trial rights and help link it to regional case-law.

National Action Plans

With several pieces of EU legislation on criminal justice matters now in force, national implementation needs to be monitored to ensure that EU standards on procedural rights are given adequate execution. This is why at the 2017 LEAP Annual Conference, we asked LEAP members to gather in national groups, discuss about key fair trial issues in their country, and strategise about how to overcome them, by developing what we call “national initiatives”.

National initiatives are LEAP-driven action plans to enhance the effective implementation of fair trial rights in their countries, and are coordinated by Fair Trials Europe.
How we communicate about the network

Our communications channels

As a member of the LEAP network, you have been subscribed to our mailing list, which Fair Trials will use to keep you in the loop about the activities of the network, as well as to circulate surveys and queries from other members.

Once every quarter, you will receive a newsletter about the latest developments and actions of the network. You can find past newsletters here.

The easiest way to keep up to date with day-to-day news about the network is to follow Fair Trials' official social profiles, on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

You can also find news and updates about the network on the dedicated section of Fair Trials' website here.

How to talk about the network

At Fair Trials, we are eager to see LEAP members talking about the network with their contacts and among their own constituencies.

However, as the network currently counts over 200 members and continues to grow, accurate and consistent communication about LEAP across the network becomes crucial.

The sections below will help you talk about the network and advertise your membership in LEAP, including in your email signature, on your social profiles or when talking to the media.

Logo

Please use the official logo below, which you can copy and paste in your email signature and documents:
Official wording

**Fair Trials:** Fair Trials is the global criminal justice watchdog. We care about the right to a fair trial and we fight for just criminal justice systems across the world.

**LEAP:** The Legal Experts Advisory Panel (LEAP) is Fair Trials’ European network of criminal justice experts. With over 200 members from across Europe, LEAP monitors the status of fair trial rights on the ground and pushes for reform at the national level.

Advertising your membership

If you are a member of the LEAP Advisory Board, you can use one of the following options:

- Fair Trials' Advisor for [name of your country]
- Advisory Board member of the Legal Experts Advisory Panel

If you're writing in a language other than English, please use the most appropriate translation.

If you are an ordinary member of the LEAP network, you can use one of the following options:

- Member of the Legal Experts Advisory Panel for [name of your country]
- Member of the LEAP network for [name of your country]
How we process your personal data

Like most organisations, from May 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation means that we’re making some changes to our data and privacy policies. As a valued member of the LEAP network we wish to ensure you are fully aware of how the personal data you provide will be used.

How we will use your data

Before storing any data about you, we will send you a short form to fill out, where we will ask you whether you agree to have your data stored by Fair Trials.

If you agree, we will:

• store your contact details in our Mailchimp database which we will use to disseminate news and LEAP quarterlies;
• use your data to circulate LEAP-related content, including queries from other LEAP members;
• use your data to target surveys and questionnaires to those LEAP members who have experience with or expertise on specific issues;
• share your contact details with other LEAP members.
• share your email address with non-LEAP members, in case we are asked for referrals.

In addition, we may ask you to support the LEAP network and Fair Trials by making an optional donation.

How to obtain a copy of your data, correct your data or request removal of incorrect data

Please email Iva at iva.petkovic@fairtrials.net with your request.

Find and fill in our surveys here!