TransLaw – Exploring Legal Interpreting Service Paths and Transcultural Law Clinics for persons suspected or accused of crime (2018–2019)

Purpose of TransLaw

Since the adoption of Directive 2010/64/EU and its transposition into member states' legislation, the focus of interpreting and translation in criminal proceedings has been on quality and the related need for concrete actions promoting professionalisation of legal interpreters and awareness raising on transcultural service paths. The TransLaw project aims to foster cooperation between legal professionals and legal interpreters and enhance the efficiency of their work with a view to protecting the rights of persons suspected or accused of crime (PAC). The development of transcultural law clinics, which is the final goal of the project, will provide an excellent training opportunity enabling future legal professionals and interpreters to acquire the competences needed in transcultural service paths.

Methodology and outputs

The main aim of the project is to increase knowledge about universities' possibilities to provide legal support services to PAC in transcultural law clinics, to study service paths of PAC who do not speak the language of the jurisdiction and the possibilities and constraints of legal interpreters, to publish recommendations on how to enhance these service paths, to implement joint transdisciplinary trainings and awareness-raising workshops for legal and interpreting professionals, and to pilot transcultural law clinics. The project focuses on the following target groups: persons suspected or accused of crime, legal professionals, and legal interpreters.

The project employs a wide range of methodologies. In the first project phase, desk research is used to compile a report on the *Development and current state of transcultural law clinics*, and working groups are set up to prepare the transcultural law clinics that will be piloted in the last phase of the project. The service paths of PAC will be analysed in the second phase through literature review and empirical research (interviews), and the results of this research will be compiled in a recommendation paper for all stakeholders working with PAC who require interpreting. In the third project phase, awareness-raising workshops and joint trainings for legal professionals and interpreters will be organised and training materials will be developed. Finally, the transcultural law clinics will be piloted, with law students and interpreting students working together in complex service paths and documenting the process in logbooks which will lead to a report on the law clinics.

Transcultural law clinics

The project aims to establish transcultural law clinics for criminal law at the participating universities. In law clinics, law students provide legal aid under the supervision of legal experts and academics, receiving clinical training in real-world settings and improving access to justice for marginalised and underserved parts of the population. Transcultural law clinics expand this population to those who do not speak the language of the jurisdiction sufficiently to manage in a legal setting: nationals of other EU member states, immigrants from third countries (including second- and third-generation immigrants), and refugees. The interpreting students providing interpretation services – also under supervision of an interpreting trainer or professional – gain experience with real cases, become sensitised to the needs of vulnerable people, and, like the law students, gain an understanding of the ethics and social responsibility of their profession. The cooperation of the two groups of students is mutually beneficial and enriching, with interpreting students gaining a better understanding of legal processes and work in dialogic settings, and law students learning to work with interpreters, understanding what they can and cannot expect from them, and what the code of conduct and ethics of interpreters are.

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