

NEWSLETTER

October/November 2010

JURK as an organisation

JURK is an organisation consisting entirely of women. We are 16 case workers, four girls in the international department, a manager, a legal information position and a front office secretary. In addition there are girls who have finished their year as case workers that are now working on various projects, to secure the quality of our work or writing their thesis.

The case workers work at JURK for one year only so half the staff changes each semester. We are divided into three groups specialized in different areas.



Linn Cecilie Hellum and Eva Kristine Sogn from the housing and immigration group studying Norwegian laws.

Our group specializes in violence against women, debt and prison. We help women who have suffered violence apply for compensation from the government in cases where they have not previously received compensation. We help women sort out their debt and either try to stop the payments for a certain period or negotiate a payment plan. We visit prisons on a regular basis to receive cases. Cases in prison are typically execution of the sentence, health rights, women who have previously suffered violence and a lot of debt since women in prison no longer has an income.

Another one of the three groups work with employment and social benefit cases. They can assist in negotiating with employers and submitting complaint to denied benefits. This group also runs a project against discrimination. They go to different adult education centres, Norwegian classes and other places where they hold lectures about discrimination.

The third group at JURK are specialized in housing- and immigration law. They deal both with rental housing and real estate, and can help women on either side of a conflict. They can assist when taking cases to a conflict resolution court for housing cases and submit complaints to the directorate of immigration (UDI) in cases regarding family reunion, citizenship and so on. This group also runs a project where they go out to adult Norwegian classes to hold lectures about different legal issues that are important to the target audience.



Birsen Erkmen from the group specialized in violence against women, debt and prison

Joint seminar for the free legal aid divisions

The 4th -6th of October all five free legal aid organizations run by students in Norway went to Geilo for a joint seminar. Altogether we were about a hundred students gathered for

professional and social meetings. We learned a lot from the other organizations by discussing experiences and ways of organizing our work. The subject for the seminar was the Parliament's proposal for a first line service with free legal aid offer to all citizens. This shall include one hour of free legal counseling to all citizens every year. We feel that the proposal is a great initiative, but our concern is who will offer this service, and how can we secure that the advice given is legally correct.



Linn Cecilie Hellum, Eva Kristine Sogn, Marte Johansen and Eli Apold

A Baltic delegation visit

In the beginning of October we were lucky to have visitors from the Baltic states. Altogether twelve representatives from Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, came to our offices in Oslo to hear about our organization. We told them about how we work with clients and also about how we try to influence our government and improve women's right in our country, and also in Guatemala and Tanzania. They were eagerly asking a lot of questions, and the meeting was quite informal. They were especially interested in our country's compensation arrangement given by the state to people who have suffered psychological or physical injuries caused by violence. Violence and sexual abuse of women is an increasing problem in their countries, and therefore this subject was discussed the most.

A Chinese delegation visit

The 27th of October a group of Chinese men from the Chinese Justice Department and a Legal aid Center came to visit us. They had their own translator, and this meeting was also quite

informal with them asking a lot of questions and wanted to learn more about our government's national arrangements for free legal aid, and the free legal office in Oslo. They were surprised to hear that in Norway we have a problem with domestic violence. Also our weekly visit to prisons they found interesting, as they could not believe that the management in these prisons agreed to us helping the prisoners.

International evening at JURK

Thursday 21st of October the International Division of JURK invited all of our caseworkers to the annual international evening at JURK. This included food from both Tanzania and Guatemala. Marianne and Silje bought samosas from a street vender, and cooked us chicken in Tanzania style. Marta and Marit who work with MTM in Guatemala, served quesadillas, nachos, guacamole and beans. This evening is by far the most popular happening of the year at JURK. After dinner Silje and Marianne showed us pictures from their trip to Tanzania in May this year, and told us about Kwieco and your fantastic work. We saw amazing photos of landscape and inspiring photos from your legal aid camp. After this, Marta and Marit from the project in Guatemala followed up with pictures and stories from their trip to Guatemala a few weeks ago. We were all inspired by seeing the great and very important job you do, and we look forward to learn more about the projects.



Linn Cecilie Hellum and Eva Kristine Sogn

Family violence coordinators

In the ministry's action plan called "Vendepunkt" (turning point) politicians called for every police district to have a family

violence coordinator in a full time position. Norway is divided into 28 police districts.

JURK has now called every police district to research the situation. We found that most districts have a family violence coordinator in theory. Only four districts did not have a family violence coordinator at all. We also discovered that in reality several of the family violence coordinators are put to other tasks that are irrelevant to their position as a family violence coordinator. In reality only eight districts have a full time employed family violence coordinator.

JURK is still working on this issue and we are trying to raise awareness through the media.



Celine Løyning from the group specialized in housing- and immigration law

JURK's subsidies from the local authorities have been cut

A large part of JURKs annual budget consists of subsidies from the local authorities in Oslo. Every year our subsidies are cut and we have to argue to raise it again. This year was no exception. Tina, our political leader and substitute manager went with three case workers to city hall and received ten minutes speaking time to the committee. Now we are waiting to see what happens. Running an organisation such as ours is a constant struggle for money to be able to help more women.

The women's panel

The ministry of children, gender equality and integration established a women's panel earlier this year. The panel has consisted of women from various parts of the Norwegian society and was led by Loveleen Brenna, a Norwegian/Indian author. The goal of the women's panel was to contribute to the debate and the modernization of gender equality in Norway. Lovleen Brenna visited JURK in August. When the report came in October, JURK was mentioned twice. We hope the report can lead to positive changes for women in Norway.

Report to CEDAW

JURK has written a shadow report to the Women's Committee and to the 8th Norwegian report to the implementation of the Women's Convention in Norway. All case workers have made contributions to the report based on the issues JURK experience through our work on a daily basis. JURK's contribution will be part of a joint report with FOKUS' organizations. This should be sent to the Women's Committee in January 2011. Internally, we will also use the report for our legal policy work.



Eli Apold and Helene Stake from the group specialized in violence against women, dept and prison