

This year I had the opportunity to participate with the University of Lucerne in the prestigious European Law Moot Court Competition. This is an international competition held in French and English but open to any Law school from all around the world.

The process of the Moot Competition consists in the drafting of a written pleading regarding a theoretical case of European Law. After the submission of written pleadings, only the best 48 teams pass to one of the four Regional Finals, each held at a different university either in Europe or the US. In this second phase, the oral and the rhetorical skills are evaluated. Only the first-placed team at each Regional Final is allowed to run for the Grand Final in Luxembourg which takes place in front of judges of the European Court of Justice!

I am a student in my final semester of law at the University of Pavia in Italy. I spent the last semester in Lucerne under the Erasmus project. When I enrolled at the University, I was not aware of this Moot Court. I actually did not even know what a moot court was! When Professor Sebastian Heselhaus proposed that I take part in this competition, I was thus a little worried. The time and effort required to be put into the preparation of this moot court were really demanding. But I decided to accept nonetheless, together with five other native English-speaking exchange students, and three students of the University of Lucerne.

Though demanding, the opportunity to learn how to write a correct legal memorandum, to improve legal analysis skills and even to learn how to use a proper legal lexicon in French and English is a really strong motive to push you to face this tough task. When I started, I actually had no practical knowledge of how to write a formal pleading to be submitted. After having passed many years in studying law, I realised how hard it was to use all my theoretical legal awareness in a concrete case!

Fortunately, the Faculty of Law at Lucerne did not simply leave us to work alone. I would like to thank Clotilde Pegorier and Lucas Kruettli, our coaches, who in the limits allowed within the rules of the Competition, helped us to address our research and to solve problems regarding complicated aspects of the case-law of the European Court of Justice, as well as providing constant support and encouragement for further improvements.

Writing the pleading was indeed a difficult task. It involved nearly three months of research, reading and discussion. I was particularly happy to have some English native speakers in the team, who already had experience in writing legal texts in that language. I really learned a lot from them.

Eventually, the pleading was submitted, the result judged and we were invited to the Regional Final in Madrid!

To prepare for the oral phase, we did not have so much time. Nevertheless, we spent an intensive month preparing our arguments and rehearsing our speeches. At this stage, it is requested to plead in one of the three roles admitted in front of the panel: the Applicant side, the Defendant side and the Commission Representative. Although you are free to choose between English and French as the language of pleading, it is recommended to use both.

I was very excited for the Regional Final in Madrid. We stayed there for three days, hosted by the University CEU San Pablo. We had to face competition from very good universities from all over Europe. Of course, I was quite stressed, though looking forward to the challenge!

All the 12 teams present pleaded during the first day. Unfortunately, we did not pass to the second round and I was naturally quite disappointed. However, the remaining two days were nonetheless a worthwhile experience, as I had the opportunity to watch and listen to the four best teams pleading from a relaxed position, and I can say that it was most interesting and enlightening.

So, even though we did not go to Luxembourg, this experience truly changed my life: it made clearer my expectations towards my future professional life, it gave me a solid knowledge and awareness in legal pleading skills and it even increased my self-confidence. After all the effort and time spent for this competition, I am very happy and proud that I chose to take part.

Thus, my only advice to all the students that have not yet tried it, is to follow the motto of the Competition: moot, meet and compete!

(Riccardo Vigano)