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E.MA's 2012-2013 Moot Court

[Moot courts as a fundamental training for human rights activists](#)

The European Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation has gathered a selected group of professionals of different disciplines to work towards the defence of human rights and promote democracy all over the world. To implement such an ambitious programme, the moot court plays a fundamental role as it contributes to the practical training of the students involved.

[This year's E.MA's moot court](#)

This year's moot court treated a polemical case, brought to the European Court of Human Rights, regarding the reaction of Belgian authorities to terrorists' threats. The volunteer participants were divided in three groups to represent the Belgian government, the victims and the amicus curiae at the mock trial. The case had to be analysed under the scope of, among others, articles 2 and 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights which establish the right to life and the prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

This year E.MA was honoured with the active participation of the following invited judges:

- First, **Paul Lemmens**, E.MA Director at KU Leuven, University of Leuven since the beginning of this Master's programme and who just gave up this position to assume the role of Judge in front of the European Court of Human Rights since September of this year.
- Second, **Koen Lemmens**, professor at KU Leuven, University of Leuven, specialist on Human Rights and proceedings before the European Court of Human Rights and current E.MA Director.

This enriching exciting and fun experience allowed the students to develop critical and argumentative legal skills, to familiarize themselves with the procedural aspect and the litigation system in front of the European Court of Human Rights while growing in-depth knowledge on the interpretation of the European Convention.

Feedback of some students

“The Moot Court is an excellent exercise to see how things work in practice. For me, it was a real challenge to defend a state that is condemned for the violation of an absolute right such as the prohibition of torture but the main point of the Moot Court is to enjoy it - the judgment of the Court does not matter. In a nutshell, I definitely recommend next generations of students to be involved in such exercise whether or not you are a lawyer. We both (lawyers & non-lawyers) learnt a lot from this experience.”

Damien Ruggeri

“With a team of six E.MA students we threw ourselves for a week in the craziness of the moot court, which simulated a case for the European Court of Human Rights. As the legal representatives of the Kingdom of Belgium, we had to defend ourselves against the allegations of the applicant that we violated Article 2 (the right to life) and Article 3 (the prohibition of torture) of the European Covenant of Human Rights. Not the easiest task for six newly appointed legal representatives. The result was a lot of sleep deprivation, many pizza boxes everywhere, caffeine overdoses and a big table with six laptops to search for case law and legislation. After we sent in our observations to the Court, we had to plead in front of five serious looking judges, among them the newly appointed judge of the European Court of Human Rights, judge Paul Lemmens. Although, we did not win the case, we were proud as a group about the result.”

Stefan van Uden and Jonathan Bernaerts.

“This event offered unique opportunities and brought a lot of positive emotions to every E.MA student as well as the professors. Such practical training contributed greatly to the brining of a proper understanding of the operational requirements and challenges of the practical aspect of human rights protection among all the students. I would like to thank the professors of the Programme for their desire, dedication and perfect sense of humour that inspire us (coming from various parts of the world) to devote ourselves more and more to the fantastic task that has brought us here – to fight for human rights respect and protection. E.MA Moot Court offering a great field for creativity has demonstrated the way this very task may be achieved!”

Aleksandra Koneva