

## Report for the Erasmus+ scholarship

### **Introduction**

My traineeship took place at the European Court of Human Rights (hereinafter referred to as “ECtHR”) in Strasbourg, France, from 9<sup>th</sup> September 2019 until 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020.

### **Preparation (Planning, Organization and Application at the internship institution)**

In order to apply for a traineeship at the Council of Europe, an online form had to be filled out, in which you had to indicate why you believe to be the best candidate for the traineeship, and which skills (language, computer, education, training courses, professional experience) you possess. It was also possible to choose which department you wish to work in. The online form had to be submitted approximately half a year before the start of the traineeship.

Two months after submission of my application, I received a call from the Court’s HR department, telling me that a judge is interested in working with me and asking whether I would still be interested and available, which I gladly affirmed. Again one month later, I received the official acceptance letter from the Council of Europe.

In order to prepare for the traineeship, I participated in the court “International Human Rights”, offered by the University of Cologne. Furthermore, I studied current case-law of the Court as well as recent developments in the area of human rights.

### **Accommodation**

It was honestly not easy to find a place to stay in Strasbourg for a period of only 5 months. For two months, I have contacted different places (agencies, individuals, student residences), both for private and shared housing. The student residences were already fully booked, and individuals wanted people to stay longer. Agencies were not very helpful neither and usually asked for high fees only to search a place to stay. Admittedly, the information provided by the receiving institution were not really helpful.

In the end, a person working for one agency offered an apartment which he rented privately and which he had just renovated. As it was located close to the Court and the rent was not excessively high, I decided to stay there, even though I had not seen any pictures of the apartment prior to my arrival in Strasbourg.

### **Internship (Tasks, Contents, achieved learning outcomes)**

#### **My tasks**

During the first three days after my arrival, the Council of Europe had organized induction days for all trainees and staff starting to work in September. The following information was provided:

- Presentation of the organization Council of Europe (various departments, Commissioner for Human Rights, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Human Resources etc.)
- Practical information regarding the traineeship (fire safety, safety and security in general, IT etc.)
- Visit of the Assembly Chamber (Hemicycle) and the ECtHR

### **Academic work**

My first task was to write a speech for a conference at the European Investment Bank, with the main focus on civil service law and the ECHR in an employment context. It also included a comparison between the ECHR and the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights and Freedoms. The most relevant issues were surveillance at workplace and other work-related rights.

Apart from that, I proof-read articles and speeches and conducted further research on diverse topics, including the case-law of the ECtHR and the Court of Justice of the European Union.

### **Non-academic work**

Regarding my non-academic work, I worked with various cases before the Court, including:

- Adding aspects of German law to a comparative law part of a judgment
- Writing a legal note on a Chamber Judgment, which was pending before the Grand Chamber after referral
- Research on the applicability of Article 6 ECHR to a particular case

### **Various**

Apart from my academic and non-academic work, my tasks were very varied and included:

- Taking part in the Court's various language clubs (French, Italian, German)
- Visiting the PACE (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe) sessions
- Attending public hearings before the Grand Chamber
- Participating in trainings offered by the Court (e.g. The Life of an Application)
- Participating in the Human Rights Discussion Club and film presentations
- Information session by the Council of Europe Department for the Execution of Judgments of the ECHR
- Security Awareness Session by the Council
- Being an active member of the Trainee Committee
- Two meetings with judges who provided further information of the Court and its internal working methods
- Attending the farewell conference of the German judge
- Translating German Decisions into English

## **Everyday life and leisure**

As the official traineeship programme of the Council of Europe started in September, I met many trainees from all different countries right from the beginning and throughout the traineeship we organized various activities, e.g. hiking in the Voges and the Black Forest, a visit to Colmar and Riquewirth and attending the impressive Christmas Market.

Staff of the Council of Europe is invited to attend a social gathering called “Apeurope”, which takes place once a month and which was a great opportunity to meet different people.

Strasbourg is a city which has a lot to offer, including cinemas, museums, free walking tours and great restaurants and cafés.

It was also possible to attend activities organized by Amicale, like different sports and social actions.

## **Conclusion**

I am very satisfied with the traineeship and my experience, both in terms of professional as well as personal achievements. The insight into the Court and the possibility to closely work with a judge on current cases as well as diverse human rights issues were indeed unique and extremely enriching. I felt welcomed and valued throughout my entire stay, not only by my supervisor, but by everyone I met at the Council and the Court.

The traineeship has further strengthened my knowledge of the European Convention on Human Rights and human rights in general, and it has reassured my desire to work in this area of law. Furthermore, the personal encounters with people coming from different countries was fascinating and inspiring.

Lastly, the Erasmus+ scholarship enabled me to fully live this traineeship experience, without having to work next to the traineeship and thus being able to completely concentrate on my work at the Court.