



My CJEU visit as best speaker of the CEEMC...

Anna Yatsyshyn (member of team from Kyiv Mohyla Academy University in Kyiv, Ukraine)

I became interested in EU law when the Euromaidan in Ukraine started. I was too young and inexperienced to fully understand what EU values were and why are they worth fighting for. Later, when I moved to Kyiv, I realized that a large number of people work daily on implementing the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, which Ukrainians were striving for so insistently, and on deepening EU-Ukraine relations. I wanted to be one of them some day.

So, I did not hesitate when the possibility arose to be part of Kyiv Mohyla University's moot team and to take part in the Central and Eastern European Moot Court in May 2019, which took place at the CJEU in Luxembourg. Kyiv Mohyla Academy University has a long history of participating in the CEEMC and the competition was also held in Kyiv in 2009, so it felt as though I was taking part in one aspect of European cooperation that already had its own history.

CEEMC was special for me because I saw how it feels to be a Respondent breaching EU law and needing to defend the position. It was much easier to blame the Member State than to be a Member State :) However, despite the tension, this was the best way to get the idea of what a real CJEU hearing can look like. The CEEMC was a tough competition, judged by a fantastic judicial panel (including multiple AGs and judges from the CJEU) who are extremely knowledgeable about the case and are not afraid to ask tough questions! At the same time, it had a very friendly atmosphere in between the mooting rounds, with all of the participating teams, judges and organisers mingling and enjoying themselves (especially during the final party).

My competition was all about teamwork. I consider my Best Speaker award not only mine. It would not have been possible without the help of my teammates producing rebuttal points for me (one of the papers was brought directly to me pleading in the final in the Grande Salle of the Court and saved me from leaving our opponent's argument without a reply :)

Receiving the best speaker's award was unforgettable. Not only because of the very moment when AG Sharpston herself presented me with the award, but also because I realized that it enabled me to visit the Court of Justice again for a longer stage/internship. That happened in the wonderful Luxembourgish autumn. The golden walls of the Court were shining bright in the sun's rays as I arrived for a 2-week experience at the heart of the EU's court.

I was incredibly happy to spend 1 week in the cabinet of Advocate General Bobek and another week in the cabinet of AG Sharpston. Both AGs (and all of the staff with whom they work) were extremely friendly and hugely supportive, generously sharing their knowledge and their time with me.

AG Bobek (who also judges every year at the CEEMC and was, apparently, also a CEEMC mooter himself and a student of the British Law Centre in Prague many years ago) answered my question about how AG opinions are prepared by telling me that there's nothing exciting in the process. But I can say for sure that there is. The level of understanding and value-oriented approach to legal issues which I observed in the Court's cabinets is admirable. No matter how complex the case is, what happens in the Court is not about emotions, but about a careful balancing of interests to keep the EU viable and to deepen integration. It's about researching previous case law and at the same time about making the interpretation up-to-date and reacting to new challenges.

Sometimes, when surfing the media, one could be forgiven for concluding that the dream of European integration has reached its expiry date. In that regard, a visit to the CJEU is an efficient vaccine against Euroscepticism. This is the place where true EU law is a way of thinking, a way of acting and the only possible option.

CJEU is a place that feels like home, where everyone is on the same page. Dozens of talented and sociable interns built a network where everyone is accepted, and no one feels alone.

Both the moot court competition and the CJEU visit were great experiences for me, the main difference being that, during the competition, you look for arguments to support your party's opinion, whereas in the Court you look for arguments for justice.

My experience with CEEMC was just incredible. I would encourage everyone to participate who:

- felt eurosceptical at least once
- wants to see EU law in action
- learns EU law a lot, but still doesn't get the main ideas of it

And probably you will be the next one who will touch the EU justice. You can be sure that, even if you don't manage to win the competition itself, your hard work during the preparations will definitely pay off. You will leave the competition with stronger friendships between you, your teammates, other mooted teams from throughout the CEE region and even judges of the CJEU. You'll experience what it is like to rely on yourself and your teammates to present a case to the best of your abilities and to deal with questions from an expert judicial bench. And – just as importantly – you'll have great fun and return from the competition with some fantastic memories.

I would definitely encourage you to take part and to already start asking your university for support (including financial support) to help you and your teammates participate and perform as well as possible. These things can take a while to sort out, so don't hesitate – start today!

Many thanks to the CEEMC and special thanks to AGs Bobek and Sharpston for having been so generous and kind in allowing me to join them at the heart of European justice within the CJEU!

Anna Yatsyshyn (member of team from Kyiv Mohyla Academy University in Kyiv, Ukraine)