

Reflections on the Regional Rounds 2020-21

PRICE MOOT COURT COMPETITION 2020-21



Reflections

This year saw a total of 100 teams registering their participation across 8 regions (Africa, South East Europe, Asia Pacific, North East Europe, South Asia, Northern Europe, Americas, Middle East). Teams participated with enthusiasm despite the entirely virtual format and we received tremendous support from our regional coordinators and judges around the world, once again, without them the Competition could not take place.

A total of 30 teams qualified for the International Rounds of the Moot. But for the pandemic, we would have welcomed teams, coaches and judges from around the world to Oxford - but we hope that the experience remains just as valuable and exciting on our virtual platform. Hear what some of our Regional Partners have to say about what the Competition means to them.

South East Europe Round

Reflecting on organising and carrying out the very first Virtual Regional Round: Szabolcs Zoldreti, South East Europe Regional Co-ordinator.

After watching how last year's Oxford Rounds unfolded in an unprecedented decision to hold the Finals in a digital format, it was time to continue and start all over again this year with organising the procedure for the first online Regional Rounds.

Unfortunately, even a year after the World Health Organization characterised COVID-19 as a pandemic, the virus is still amongst us, and holding an 'in person' version of the moot was therefore out of question. Since the South East European Round was the first in line in Hungary's oldest and biggest university, Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), it was time to devise a strategy on how to unroll a complete Regional Round online. Unsurprisingly, we were thus being addressed as a 'guinea pig' to see how it could all be done virtually from the beginning to the very end.

I would not be telling the truth if I said that there weren't any anxious moments. Instead of the usual, well-known logistical challenges on finding a judge or a room to host the moot new challenges have emerged. This time there was no running up and down between the different corridors, as just by a click, we could drop in on all the different breakout rooms.

Nevertheless, it wasn't always easy to preserve the 'spirit of the moot' and transform it into a new found virtual arena for Ized and Xana. Nonetheless, to the best of my knowledge, no one was mooting in pyjamas, which is already considered a great accomplishment!

We feared that since students have been glued to their screens for more than a year now,



the general motivation to join into a world of Netizens would not reach the previous levels. Luckily life proved us wrong, as there were a record number of registers. Teams from excellent universities, who now counted on us to give them the thrill of what it meant to moot and receive more than just a usual, regular online meeting.

As the final date approached, we received some guidance from the Bonavero Institute of Human Rights at the University of Oxford, so it was now time for us to test the waters and see whether we could swim in 'deep water' too.

Given the uncharted territory that we were about to embark on, we followed Robb Stark's example and called upon our banners for support, who we are eternally grateful for. We cannot express all our thanks to all those who came together in the Price Moot Court community and helped us to give our best shot.

Even so, I am not saying that there were no hiccups, breakdowns, or quirks along the road as if someone had accidentally put on a filter and claimed that they were indeed not a cat.

We hereby would like to congratulate all the teams, coaches, and the volunteer judges who have participated and honestly hope that the participants have managed to enjoy their virtual moots and that our experience could add to the benefit and improvement of all other Regional Rounds this year.

As a Regional Round coordinator, I am happy to say that hosting a regional round is a privilege and contributing to carrying out the very first Virtual Regional Round is an honour. An honour that I hope we shall never have to repeat, as next year, with some luck, we can all be reunited in not only the Kings Arms, but each others as well.

North East Europe Round

This reflection is written under the impression of quarantine, online moots and perfect people met during 2021 Price Moot: Tetiana Avdieieva, Alumni and Organising Team Member.

This year I missed my Price Moot experience more than ever. My 2019 Team has posted and reposted Instagram memories from Kyiv and Oxford, shared old jokes and funny stories, reminded the craziest arguments and discussed how unimaginably our life has changed from the moment of 2019 International Finals. We started not only feeling the borders between the States, but also experienced all the essence of distance and isolation. In the absence of certainty, it is hard to define what is right and what is wrong, where the line between those two categories lies.

Therefore, the consequences following distribution of certain kinds of information are even more unpredictable. Responding to the emerging threats governments can make steps way to far, trying to safeguard themselves



against disturbances and socially harmful consequences. And our duty, as human rights lawyers, is to balance the interests and properly guide our societies on this tricky and shaky path through the rimes of pandemic.

One of the most important contributions we can make in such circumstances is to raise conscientious and responsible young generation of lawyers, who are well-aware of outstanding legal challenges and ready to find solutions for the new complicated issues.

Despite working with a case appearing in the imaginary country with imaginary people, students are dealing with real legal and policy problems, conducting a comprehensive research and finding answers to sophisticated questions.

Applying practice of different human rights bodies, students can outline how we shall deal with the limitations on freedom of assembly and where the line of credibility of the shared information shall lie. They address the issues of the primary concern, being able to understand the essence of the positions of both sides, thus being objective and impartial. And that is the main benefit and the best outcome, which the competition can provide us with.

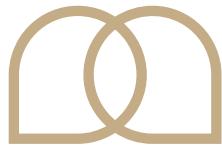
However, not only legal challenges are embroidered on the canvas of a global pandemic, but also social distancing and isolation contributed to complicatedness of our lives. Conversations in-between the rounds, warmest hugs of teammates, panic before announcement of winners and many other small important things were lost in the world of online mooting. But we still have got something instead. It the understanding that our community is still passionate and inspiring, striving for improvement and united.

The Price Moot is not about competing. The Price Moot is not about in-depth research. The Price Moot is not about prolonged preparation process. The Price Moot is not about fascinating public speaking skills. The Price Moot is not about winning. Actually, the Price Moot is about all of the listed things together and even more. Regardless of its formats, Internet-connection obstacles, tiredness and sleepless nights of structuring the memorials, it is about mutual support and feeling of one big community.

This year I have joined three Regional Rounds either in a capacity of Organising Committee member or as a judge. And each time, I had a great pleasure to virtually meet young lawyers, enjoy their expertise, inspiration and readiness to improve. And such dedication and passion are the best indicators of overwhelming necessity to proceed with organization of the Price Moot irrespective of its formats.

You never believe it is over until it is really over. I started noticing the perfectness of my Price Moot path at the very end, when the Final Round has finished and my plane landed at Kyiv airport, bringing me home. However, every Moot story is something more than just coming to the courtroom and delivering your speech. Something filled with film photos, stupid inside jokes, litres of coffee, hours of researches and diabolical questions during practicing pleadings. Something almost impossible to reach and very-very special. And the only thing I would probably like to change about my Price Moot experience is appreciating the process more.

Hence, on the last passage of my reflection, I would like to wish all the participants to enjoy everything happening around regardless of distance, isolation and technological obstacles. Online moots can never ever be compared to a real-life mooting experience. That is a sad truth of a new reality, and we have nothing but accept it. However, one day we will meet each other in person. Although in different capacities, but sharing a spirit of the same community. And I am very glad to know that this community can survive any disaster.



Reflections

At the end of all of our Regional Rounds we asked this year's participants to share their experiences posing them the following questions:

If you won an award, tell us how you celebrated in a few sentences...

I actually got gifted a puppy on the last day of the competition and my family decided to name him Moot. **Aloysius Bresnan, Asia Pacific Regional Rounds**

We won best memorial. I was so happy I told some of the protestors on the streets and they cheered for us (Lebanon is going through a hell week of street protests) **Lucy Tabakian, Middle East Regional Rounds**

Since our team is split up due to obvious covid reasons we have celebrated through "e-pero" created French term to designate virtual happy hour! **Lisa Beckers, Northern Europe Regional Rounds**

My team won Best Memorial Runner Up this year and we were thrilled! We ordered takeout and stayed together night in talking of past glories, as if we were a unit of soldiers that had just walked out of a war as winners. After that, we told everybody we knew (and the people we didn't know as well) that we had won an award. We couldn't be prouder. **Bárbara Braz, Americas Regional Rounds**

We won runner-up in the final rounds, as well as several Best Oralist awards. Despite not being able to see each other, we celebrated by treating these wins as our Christmas gifts, and had a virtual celebration over Zoom before celebrating Christmas with our families.

Micah Ecarma, Asia Pacific Regional Rounds

We didn't win any. Except that I was so happy to receive my certificate. I called my mum and told her I have a certificate that has Oxford on it.

Anonymous, Africa Regional Rounds

If happen to win an award, which is really rare for me, I'd be extremely in denial, yet it would be the best thing that ever happened to me since 2019, it would not be something out of the ordinary for you guys as you always encourage young learners all around the globe. So back to the main question, if I won, I'll have the pleasure to give any one from your price media team a tour here in Egypt for free. **Ibram Hany Lewis, Middle East Regional Rounds**

Although we did not win any award, when i heard that our team had qualified for the International Rounds, i almost jumped out of the Taxi so i can run around as i could not hold the excitement with in me since this was the first time our university was taking part in this prestigious competition. **Godfrey Ayaranga, Coach, Africa Regional Rounds**

I would have thanked God, prayed and informed my parents about it along with having a group video call with the other team members and then reminiscing about the entire journey of 6-7 months when we burnt the midnight oil of preparation of the memorial and undertook grilling sessions of each other in order to prepare for the oral rounds in case we get selected for the same. **Rishab Aggarwal, South Asia Regional Rounds**

Our team won the Best Memorial Award at the South Asian Rounds, however we only got to know about it a month later as the team missed out on the virtual award ceremony. We got on a video call and talked about the irony of this situation. **Neha Sharma, South Asia Regional Rounds**

This award mean so much to me. I give accolades to God for making this happen and to my parents, team members and coaches for their support. I couldn't have made it this far without the collective effort of my team. They are the backbone of our success recorded. Thank you so much everyone. Special thanks to the Organizers. I'm grateful. **Victoria Edem Asuquo, Africa Regional Rounds**

Unfortunately, we didn't receive any awards in the regionals, but qualifying to this international platform was applauded by our peers, which is a big deal here in our small mooting community of the country. **Maruf Hasan Tamal, South Asia Regional Rounds**

Immediately after the awards were announced we got together in our team's Meet, shared a drink and just couldn't stop smiling! Our coach even said he was going to frame our memorial and hang it in his room! Afterwards I just slept until I physically couldn't anymore. **María José Escobar, South East Europe Regional Rounds**

Tell us about your experience at the virtual regional rounds of the Price Moot in a few sentences: What did you enjoy? How was it different this year? Did you have to overcome obstacles to participate?

I really enjoyed the format of the competition and the enthusiasm shown by our opponent teams and the judges. We were the first team to participate in the Price Moot from our University and had no one familiar with the moot or its subject-matter to help us during the preparatory stages. However, with time we geared up to the moot with the resources available on the website of the moot. We also had to coordinate everything virtually as we lived in different parts of the country, and communication was key in enabling concerted action. Personally, coming from an obscure village with poor internet connectivity in the house, I was very worried about the quality of my audio and video during the virtual regional rounds, but the judges were very understanding of any such glitches.

Indumugi C, South Asia Regional Rounds

Price Media is a very special competition. I especially enjoyed the excellence and enthusiasm from the judges in the final round. Their warm, welcoming tone and demeanor put

every speaker at ease during the match. The obstacles I had to overcome was most certainly a lack of experience. Before joining Price I had never participated in a Moot before and I haven't even done International Law in my legal studies. It was one massive hill to climb, but an enjoyable one at that. The learning curve has been both refreshing and enlightening. Taking part in this competition has been one of the honours of my University career.

Heinrich Nienaber, Africa Regional Rounds

Participating in the virtual oral rounds this year was a team effort. So many different and new variations had to be considered, adjustments needed to be made in order for my team to be ready and to deliver the best panels we hoped. It was all very odd, because I only came to personally know my teammates in the week of the oral presentations, since, up till that moment, we had only ever had contact through video conferences. **Bárbara Braz, Americas Regional Rounds**

The Asia Pacific regional rounds of the Price Moot were immensely enjoyable as a participant. It was superbly well-planned in terms of the scheduling of the rounds, and there were also no technical hiccups during the regional rounds. I am happy to be participating in the Price moot amidst a time where the world is battling the coronavirus pandemic, and I am even more impressed by how well organised it is. For that, I am deeply grateful for Nevena and the Bonavero Institute of Human Rights planning of the event. **Joel Soon, Asia Pacific Regional Rounds**

The research was rather hard, but the oral rounds were exciting. It was an amazing experience - stressful but rewarding. We had to overcome several obstacles, like the departure of our best team member. I needed to learn another speech to appear before the judges instead of her very quickly. **Viktor Pasichnyk, North East Europe Regional Rounds**

I particularly enjoyed the moot masterclasses organised by the Bonavero Institute, an attempt at making the Competition seem real in these unprecedented times. **Neha Sharma, South Asia Regional Rounds**

Undoubtedly, the virtual option is not a preferable one for most of us. However, I was quite surprised by how much energy and enthusiasm can be gained even in a digital version of a Moot Court. **Styliani Roussou, South East Europe Regional Rounds**

The virtual moot was an interesting experience to say the least. Participating in the Oxford Price Moot in this way was not what I had imagined when I signed up, but it was a completely rewarding experience. Despite the global pandemic, from the comfort of my bedroom, I was able to engage with International Human Rights Law dealing with freedom of expression and assembly in the context of an emerging health crisis – how topical! I truly enjoyed the virtual collegiality and all of the amazing advice and feedback that the benches provided.

Brittany Town, Americas Regional Rounds

It was quite an experience participating in a completely virtual moot. Last year, I remember distinctly that our team was about to leave for the international rounds when countries started closing their borders. For our safety, Price decided to cancel the in-person rounds in London and the competition, for the most part, was held digitally via recorded videos. This time around, we had a full-fledged virtual moot experience. Due to the inherent barrier of having to speak in front of a laptop, the challenge for oralists became more than just arguing their side but most importantly, learning the skills of reaching through the screen to communicate to the judges. **Angela Casauay, Asia Pacific Regional Rounds**

Mooting during the Covid-19 pandemic is not as easy as it was during normal times, but it is not less exciting and challenging. I really enjoyed meeting and confronting brilliant young minds from all around Europe and especially during the oral part of the competition I almost forgot that I was competing from home and I felt the courtroom vibe! **Deborah Tosi, Northern Europe Regional Rounds**

The virtual regional rounds in a way did make the moot more accessible for a lot of teams/ participants who maybe lacked the resources required. Personally, for our team, coming from a place where we did not have anyone to guide us or tell us about their experience of the moot, we became the first team from our university to ever qualify to and participate in the South Asia Rounds. We are grateful for the opportunity provided, and we shall continue to inspire and guide the forthcoming batches of our university for venturing into this area of IHRL and Media Law. **Shambhavi Sharma, South Asia Regional Rounds**

