

## *Report on my traineeship experience at the European Court of Human Rights*

My traineeship at the European Court of Human Rights running from September 2018 until January 2019 proved to be an educationally enriching and practically revelatory experience. Working under the supervision of the judge elected in respect of Romania, not only did I discover different facets and interact with various actors of the Court's life, but I also familiarised myself with the implementation of the Convention system in practice.

With respect to the educational aspect of the experience, the preparation of case-law lists and summaries of judgments, reports, comparative law studies and drafts of research abstracts in the context of the academic work of the Romanian judge allowed me to hone my research and writing skills on international and European human rights law. Furthermore, through my engagement with the judicial aspect of her work, in the form of preparation of comments on the Judge Rapporteurs' notes on pending cases before the fourth section of the Court, I developed my critical thinking on judicial reasoning and the ability to genuinely articulate within tight deadlines my opinion on controversial points of law. Moreover, my contribution to the academic preparation of a conference on 'International and European law and the challenges to the rule of law' and the release of the book 'The ECHR and General International Law', both organised by the Romanian judge, provided me with further intellectual insights and the opportunity to utilise and refine my organisational and presentation skills.

What is more, from a practical point of view, I acquainted myself throughout the traineeship with the practicalities of the function of the Court and the judicial discourse underlying its judgements. Having been able to hear in the context of section meetings, oral arguments by a Chamber of the Court, was particularly illuminating on how legal, policy and practical reasons, as well as considerations of judicial tradition, shape the outcome of the judges' decision on a case. This instructive experience was complemented by academic discussions I took the initiative to share with the Cypriot and the Portuguese judges. The latter comprised thought-provoking views and critical arguments on seminal human rights cases, such as *Hutchinson v. the UK* and *Campeanu v. Romania*, and the general legal and political issues they raise in contemporary Europe. My acquaintance with the judicial reality of the Court was concluded with my collaboration with the Greek lawyers division consisting in my commenting on an important freedom of expression case pending against Greece. Throughout the process, I gained insights into the methodology and substance of the examination of a case on behalf of the lawyers and realised the importance of expertise on national law and the ECHR and of careful and detailed study of each case, to the optimum illumination and resolution of the legal and ethical complexities arising on each occasion.

Working for the Court and being able to observe and participate in its everyday function informed my theoretical expertise and enriched my educational stimuli at the same time. More importantly, it allowed me to put the potential, shortcomings, and, ultimately, the limits of the Court as the leading institutional factor defending human rights in Europe into perspective. In view of the substance of my whole traineeship experience, I would like to express my gratitude to the 'Oxford Global Justice Internship Programme' for financially supporting this endeavour.