

2005 European Law in Mlini

(Article published at http://www.dubrovnikportal.com/europski_kantun/europski_kantun.shtml)

In the hotel Astarea in Mlini Indiana University Law School from Indianapolis (USA) and Zagreb Law School have organized a five weeks summer law school named “Central and Eastern European Law”. The Indiana University Law School has so far organized law programs in Western Europe, China and Argentina, and this summer for the first time it organized a program also in Croatia. In the school program participated 32 American students from Indiana University and from other prominent law schools, joined by 11 students from Zagreb Law School. The Americans were mostly a few years older than our students, because in the US one cannot study law as an undergraduate program, however one can enroll after the completion of some other studies. For their stay in Mlini they had to cash out the “modest” price of 4.400 dollars (the travel and other personal expenses were not included in that price). The participants from Croatia were “treated” by their Law School since they were its best students.

According to Jennifer Ann Drobac, who among other subjects teaches family law and bioethics in Indiana, Professor Frank Emmert, Executive Director of the Center for International and Comparative Law, Indianapolis Law School chose Croatia because he considered Croatia to be the best place for students to understand the essence of European integrations. The first three weeks he spent in Mlini, afterwards he was replaced by Professor Drobac. “Croatia is a transition country that right now is on the way to the European Union. To get the full picture of the transitional processes in ex-communist countries, students need to understand history, the present situation in the transitional process and all the effort invested in it. Besides that, it is a beautiful country with rich history, plentiful cultural heritage and unbelievably kind people. When Professor Emmert told me that he is organising a summer law program in Croatia, I immediately said I want to participate in any way.” Jennifer originates from Konavli, and before her employment in Indiana she lectured at several universities in California. Her great-grandfather left Mikulici almost a hundred years ago and she was in Dubrovnik last time 27 years ago. Therefore this was an ideal opportunity to return, visit her relatives and, in her own words, “learn how to cook some local dishes”. She doesn’t speak Croatian, but during her stay in Zupa she bought CDs that will help her with learning. Otherwise, Jennifer is thrilled with the organisation of the summer program: “It is fantastic, it surpassed all my expectations – accommodation, the quality of lectures, the engagement of students, it was all extraordinary!”

Lectures from five areas: Transformation of Legal Systems in Central and Eastern Europe, Legal Aspects of Doing Business in Central and Eastern Europe, From Application to Membership in the EU, Real Estate Acquisition and Ownership in Central and Eastern Europe and Human Rights Issues from Central and Eastern Europe Before the European Court of Human Rights took place every day from 9 am till 1 pm. The lecturers were Croatian Professors Tatjana Josipovic, Tamara Capeta, Nina Vajic (judge of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg), Branko Smerdel, Sinisa Rodin, Sinisa Petrovic and Jennifer Ann Drobac and Frank Emmert from USA.

As well as Professor Drobac, Igor Volner, Program Coordinator of the summer school in Mlini and a former student of Zagreb Law School, states that the mixture of American and Croatian students was a full score. “It is our primary concern that the students are pleased. In Mlini they had a rare opportunity for the exchange of experiences. That was a special advantage for American students because our Croatian students tried to maximally meet their

expectations. Croatian students know the topics that school program covers much better since they partially study it in the law school. For the Americans this is all new”.

The participants of the school cannot hide their satisfaction. “I like the mixture of American and Croatian students, the mutual communication was interesting. I met lots of new people from the USA, we got along well, went out together. Americans are otherwise used to different lecture methods, thus they asked most of the questions, which is not surprising, because we heard about it at our law school.” says Mislav Matajia, third year student and editor of the student magazine Lawyer.

Apart from the lectures, the exams differed from the usual exams at Zagreb Law School. “The exam questions were in essay form and we were allowed to use our notes and program materials that we received at the beginning of the program. In Zagreb we rarely have written exams, everything is based on oral exams, and when there is a written exam the questions are shorter than here in Mlini. I like this examination method very much. A passed exam gives to the American student certain credits, like they do at some faculties in Croatia. Although to us from Zagreb these points aren’t necessary, nevertheless we went to all the exams. I liked the concept and scheduling of the lectures, too. We were given enough free time, and enough time for studying and reading materials. I was in Mlini for the first time; the hotel is great as well as the hotel staff. I would specially like to mention the kindness of the restaurant staff. Two times a week we had organized free transportation to Dubrovnik, so we went to the town several times, especially if we wanted to have fun”, said Lea Zuber, fourth year student of Zagreb Law School. Otherwise, there wasn’t a lack of party over the weekends – known for their mobility, for the Americans it wasn’t a problem to “hop” all the way to Split, Sarajevo, Plitvice lakes and even to Munich.

Esperanza Rivera Alonzo, student of Indiana University, who came to USA from Mexico, is undecided when asked about her expectations and what is accomplished during the summer law school. “Perhaps I was expecting that we, the Americans, would get a deeper background about the European Union. However, probably it was our duty to learn more about the countries that aren’t in the EU yet.” says Esperanza who is thrilled with Dubrovnik. “Not only do I like it here as a vacation destination, but I would like to live here, too. This is a beautiful country; Dubrovnik is one of the prettiest places that I have ever seen. At first I wanted to join the program in France, in Strasbourg, but when Professor Emmert told me about Croatia, I changed my mind.” Esperanza says the program was very well advertised at her university, especially through the Internet.

When questioned about the natural beauty of Croatia, Daniel William Glad has only words of praise, just like Esperanza. “Dubrovnik is incredible, beautiful, divine, spectacular”, says enthusiastic Glad, who comes from the prominent Law School of University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Glad, who learned about this program through the Internet, originates from Croatia like Professor Jennifer Drobac. His family left Croatia in 1972, and he was born in USA like his brothers and sisters. – “My family is very large, coming from Vrbovsko. I understand Croatian, but I speak it like a ten-year-old child”, laughs Glad. He is very pleased because in Mlini he had an opportunity to listen to different professors from different universities. He specially liked the lectures given by Professors Emmert and Petrovic. – “The combination of the American and Croatian students was fantastic. We became friends and spent plenty of time together on the beach. Now I know Croatian lawyers, which is good in a case I need them someday (giggle).” Daniel is thrilled about the knowledge level of the Croatian students. “They are very good in one field, we in another, so we helped each other and exchanged ideas”. According to him, the differences could be noticed in other fields as

well. "Some things you see here you won't see in America. And when I came, I immediately asked myself, like most American students, where is Mc Donald's", laughs Glad, who hopes that he will have an opportunity to visit Dubrovnik in the future, too.

There isn't a lack of satisfaction among students or organisers, and there isn't a lack of new plans. According to Jennifer Drobac and Igor Volner there are plans for next year, but for the continuation of the summer law school they need an approval from the American Bar Association (ABA). Otherwise the school wouldn't be accredited in the American academic system. For the school to get the approval from the ABA in the future years, the ABA inspector visited the school and Mlini. Besides checking all the facilities hotel Astartea offered to the participants, she spoke to the students and to the lecturers. After the completion of the program there will be further analysis and evaluations, from which the results will be sufficient, according to Jennifer Drobac and Igor Volner, to secure the accreditation from the ABA. "I cannot say exactly when, but the program will for certain be held next year, too," concluded Volner.