

I would like to share my reflections regarding our participation in the Final Oral Rounds of the Helga Pedersen Moot Court Competition 2025–2026, which took place from 1 to 5 June in Strasbourg.

The Final Oral Rounds were held in the premises of the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights, providing us with a unique opportunity to engage directly with the institutional environment in which the European Convention on Human Rights (hereinafter - ECHR) is interpreted and applied. For our team, this experience represented the culmination of approximately nine months of preparation and offered valuable insight into the practical functioning of the ECHR system.

During the Final Oral Rounds, we had the opportunity to plead as the Applicant and Respondent before highly experienced judges, practitioners, and academics with expertise in human rights law. The hearings required not only a thorough command of ECHR case law but also the ability to respond to challenging questions under significant time pressure and to adapt legal arguments in real time. This experience significantly improved our legal analysis, oral advocacy, critical thinking, and ability to structure and present arguments in a clear and persuasive manner under pressure. It also strengthened our teamwork and strategic approach to litigation, particularly in responding dynamically to judicial questioning.

One of the most valuable aspects of the Final Oral Rounds was the opportunity to interact with legal professionals working within the European human rights system. We were particularly honoured to meet Judge Gediminas Sagatys of the European Court of Human Rights. Our discussion provided useful insights into the Court's work, the challenges currently faced by the ECHR system, and the practical importance of high-quality legal reasoning before international courts. We also had the privilege of meeting Ambassador Andrius Krivas, Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the Council of Europe. His interest in the competition and encouragement of student participation in international legal activities was greatly appreciated.

Beyond the pleadings themselves, the Final Oral Rounds allowed us to engage with participants from universities across Europe, exchange perspectives on human rights issues, and develop professional and academic connections within the international legal community. Being able to present arguments in the institutions responsible for the protection and promotion of human rights in Europe made the experience particularly meaningful and inspiring. It was also a great honour to represent both Lithuania and Mykolas Romeris University in such a prestigious international academic environment.

I would also like to highlight the contribution of our coach, Ivan Sukhorukov. Throughout the entire competition cycle, he coordinated the preparation process, organised and conducted training sessions, reviewed numerous drafts, prepared mock hearings, and provided detailed feedback on both legal reasoning and advocacy techniques. His guidance helped us strengthen our analytical approach, improve our oral presentation skills, and develop greater confidence in responding to difficult questions from the bench. During the Final Oral Rounds in Strasbourg, his support and advice remained invaluable, helping us remain focused and perform at our best. The progress we achieved as a team throughout the competition would not have been possible without his sustained dedication, expertise, and encouragement.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the University and to You personally for making our participation possible. The support provided by the University throughout the preparation

process was essential in enabling us to reach this stage and to perform effectively in such a demanding international environment. The Helga Pedersen Moot Court Competition provided an outstanding opportunity to deepen our understanding of the ECHR, strengthen our advocacy skills, and represent Mykolas Romeris University in a highly competitive international environment. Participating in the Final Oral Rounds in Strasbourg was a truly memorable experience that will undoubtedly contribute to our future academic and professional development.

The final results of the competition are expected to be announced later this month, and we look forward to learning the overall ranking achieved by the team.