

Introduction

On the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of Erasmus School of Law, we are happy to present you with this issue of *Erasmus Law Review*, which as opposed to all other issues of the journal that have appeared to date, does not focus on a particular theme. The unifying element of this issue, instead, is to be found in the background of the participating authors: all are doctoral candidates at Erasmus School of Law (ESL), who when they were Master students participated in the ESL Research Lab and won an ESL Doctoral Research Grant. This issue of *Erasmus Law Review* contains articles by five doctoral students who are nearing completion of their research.

A bit of history. In 2009 the then Dean of Erasmus School of Law, Professor Maarten Kroeze, decided to establish the Research Lab, as a Special Honours Program, for selected promising master students who were interested in figuring out if the pursuit of academic research was something they might wish to engage in. Concomitantly, he also made available Doctoral Research Grants for the top two participants in each year's Lab. These students are awarded a four-year, so-called, aio-position ('assistent in opleiding' or doctoral candidate) at ESL. Aios are members of staff at ESL, work under the supervision of a so-called promotor, or doctoral supervisor, and their research is part of one of the five Research Programs of the School (http://www.esl.eur.nl/home/research/research_programmes/). Kroeze asked the two of us to develop the Research Lab. In October 2009 the first Research Lab was launched with ten Master students, including Nathanael Ali, Wasima Khan and Bart Bootsma. Ali and Khan's research is financed by ESL; Bootsma's research is financed by a prestigious grant from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). Ekaterina Pannebakker and Emelie Folkesson participated in the 2010/11 Research Lab. Piotr Wilinski, also participant in the 2010/11 Research Lab, joined ESL in 2012 with a proposal that he initially developed in the Research Lab. In 2011/12, 10 Master students participated in the Research Lab, Thomas Riesthuis and Vera Willems received the ESL Doctoral Research Grants. In 2012, with the establishment of the Erasmus Graduate School of Law (http://www.esl.eur.nl/onderzoek/erasmus_graduate_school_of_law/), the Research Lab became part of the training program for doctoral students. About 12 Aios and up to five Master students now annually participate in the Research Lab. The aio-positions are financed through a variety of funds, including ESL, NWO and the China Scholarship Council. The Master students compete for one ESL Doctoral Research Grant. Evelien Engelhard, of the 2012/13 Research Lab, received the ESL Doctoral Research

Grant this year. Ten doctoral students and four Master students participate in the 2013/14 Research Lab.

The Research Lab is a year-long course during which participants develop their research proposal. From October to May the Research Lab meets every other week on Friday afternoons. Central to the philosophy of the Lab is that one learns by doing and by interacting with one's peers. The methodologies that we use for the course are based on self-reflection and bottom up peer-review in which participants articulate the main tenets of their research and comment on each other's work in various ways – ranging from developing basic aspects such as central research questions to reflecting on how a work of art might inspire them to strengthen the innovative aspects of their research. In addition, the proposals or parts thereof are reviewed by senior researchers – the various guest speakers that participate in the Lab, doctoral (and in case of master students envisaged doctoral) supervisors and ourselves. In the Research Lab the focus is on developing the methodological, theoretical and transboundary aspects of the proposals; substantive aspects, while of course discussed, are not the main focus of the Lab. In the Research Lab we aim to provide an informal and safe environment in which young researchers can learn to articulate, both in oral and written format, their research plans and how they are going to develop those plans but also the difficulties that they may face during the course of their research.

On a lighter, but important note, we want to let all past and present participants know that we thoroughly enjoy engaging in the Research Lab and the Friday afternoon sessions and have learned heaps from each and every one of you. We gain insights into criminology and about areas of law that are not familiar to us and have learned because we have to leave our own comfort zones when we try to figure out what it is that you wish to research and how you are planning to do it. We thank all participants in the Research Lab for this very valuable experience and look forward to continuing our involvement in the Lab during the years to come.

All five contributions to this issue present core arguments from the doctoral projects of the top participants in the research labs of 2009/2010 and 2010/2011. Wasima Khan and Bart Bootsma work in the area of corporate law, while Ekaterina Pannebakker researches contract law. Nathanael Ali's and Emelie Folkesson's research is in the area of public international law.

As editors of *Erasmus Law Review*, and on behalf of the Editorial Board, we thank the five contributors to this issue and look forward to working on future issues of

the journal with more recent participants in the
Research Lab.

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