

President's Message

In the week before Easter, 154 teams of students from universities in 37 countries spread across the globe will meet in Vienna for the Twelfth Edition of the Willem C. Vis International Commercial Arbitration Moot or, more simply, the now well-known Arbitration Moot. This past October, the moot case was posted on the internet. All teams filed a memorial for Claimant in December, and a counter-memorial for Respondent in February. For many students, this is the first time that they are not required to approach a case in an objective manner, like a judge or a professor, but rather must work out a strategy, structure an argument and advocate a position. There is indeed a steep learning curve from the first draft of the first memorial in the fall to the last round of oral arguments in the following spring. During the week in Vienna, each team has the opportunity to present oral argument at least four times in front of a 'real' arbitral tribunal of three members, with the competition being structured like a football tournament involving several preliminary rounds leading to a final. For many, the week in Vienna is the ultimate highlight of a student's career, a highlight which will forever be associated in their minds with arbitration.

To many arbitration practitioners, the Moot seems like just another academic event. Wrong. The Moot is an event of major importance. It is *the* place where the next arbitration generation is being raised and moulded – a place where you find the future practitioners, possibly even the stars of tomorrow. It is also a place where a true transnational culture of arbitration is being developed.

You will be pleased to know that Switzerland will be well represented at the Moot with six teams, outnumbered only by the US, Australia and Germany. This year, Switzerland has a particularly high profile, since the case is conducted under the Swiss Rules of International Arbitration and raises a number of difficult issues of jurisdiction relating to set-off and counterclaims under the Rules.

By the time that you read this message, this year's Moot will be over, but the visibility of Switzerland as a place of arbitration will hopefully last for many years after in the eyes of the next generation.

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Gabrielle Kaufmann-Kohler