

Environmental law has always been an appealing branch of law to me, how humans regulate or not their impact on the environment and the earth we depend on. It encompasses and represents most of the principles and issues of international law and human rights, such as the protection of the state sovereignty, their consent to treaties, and the fulfilling of their obligations. But more than this, environmental law has challenges in and of itself on the protection of the environment which cannot bring cases on its behalf, nor file complaints to the government, nor protest against companies actions. The environment has to be represented by lawyers and organisations in environmental law.

Hence my internship at the Estonian Environmental Law Center. For my Master's Degree in International Law and Human Rights at the University of Tartu, I have had the opportunity to complete an internship in either International Law or Human Rights. Since my Master's thesis topic focuses on Law of the Sea, Human Rights and Environmental Law, EELC was an obvious choice to pursue my interests and researches in environmental law with a team of lawyers in environmental law.

I am very grateful for having been able to complete my internship at EELC as the team has always been and continues to be welcoming, helpful and supportive. They have been very welcoming in including me in the weekly team meeting, general work of EELC and inviting me to attend a seminar on the Estonian NGO Climate Network. This allowed me to understand better the Estonian approach to environmental law and meet different people whose interests in environmental law made for instructive and uplifting conversations.

I believe that this opportunity was truly eye-opening on the practice of environmental law, the research and analysis of environmental law principles and issues. I have been able to research topics and issues I was not necessarily aware of and my thirst for knowledge and the support of my supervisor provided me with a great opportunity to do in-depth research and analyse.

I studied and analysed environmental law from a practical perspective, which is not always possible in an academic setting. During this internship, I was able to follow the evolution of the cases litigation and the practical impact of the analysis and different approaches and principles of environmental law. I learnt and saw for myself that the evolution of any branch of law takes time. Environmental law is no exception but these recent years have seen crucial changes which have increased in number as the general public begins to grasp the catastrophic stage of climate change we have reached.

This knowledge will be of tremendous help for my expertise in international law but also for my master's thesis, as I have got a better understanding of environmental law now. I have discussed with my internship supervisor the possibility of having a part of my master's thesis on one approach of environmental law, specifically the right of nature, approach that she has introduced to me from our discussions on environmental law. This approach of environmental law goes back to the issue at the core of environmental law on the whole reason for environmental lawyers to exist, it is that the environment cannot represent itself. Environmental lawyers are the voice of the environment, to bring about its arguments and call for responsibility. Therefore

one prevalent approach has been the right of nature as first introduced by Christopher D. Stone in « Should Trees Have Standing? ». In this approach he details how crucial it is to give certain rights to nature, this approach is developed further in giving elements of the environment an entity to be further represented and see their rights be protected as an obligation of different actors. This is the case for the environment in general. Therefore, not only for the forests but also rivers, lakes, different bodies of water, etc.

I am very grateful for this opportunity to have interned at EELC. I had never been so deeply involved in environmental law. This was a great opportunity for me to research the different principles, issues and cases of environmental law, and different topics I had not thought about before. This was an eye-opening experience in the sense of discovering what being a lawyer in environmental law means, what are the tasks involved in this work, what are the different principles and case law application in practice. It was also an eye-opener to broaden my interests and expertise in environmental law.

Moreover, this internship enabled me to have a new approach of environmental law and environmental rights not only for my master's thesis, but more largely for my own approach and understanding of environmental law at the Estonian, European and International levels. I would have never gotten all these insights into environmental law principles and issues, and practical application without this internship, the supportive team at EELC and an encouraging supervisor.