

See Alumna Juliette Duchesne's article on the Master of Laws: Advanced Studies in International Children's Rights (LL.M.) program, which was issued in International Social Service (ISS), International Reference Center for the Rights of Children Deprived of their Family, Monthly Review n° 208 of January 2017.

Equipping the future generation of child rights professionals

One way of safeguarding children's rights is to ensure that professionals are well prepared. The ISS/IRC is pleased to include this testimony by Juliette Duchesne describing the Masters in International Children's Rights at Leiden University in The Netherlands - an exceptional learning opportunity.

Why this course?

After completing a minor bachelor in European Studies and a master degree in European law and human rights law in Belgium, the time had come for me to begin my professional career. However, I faced challenges if I wanted to work in my main field of interest -children's rights. Prospective employers were seeking candidates with experience, experience which I did not have despite my numerous years of studies. As a consequence, I decided to apply to the LLM in International Children's Rights at Leiden University in The Netherlands due to the prestigious international reputation of the University.

What did the course include and what did I learn?

The 2015-2016 academic year was the first year of the program, a total of eight students from seven different nationalities. We represented a vast majority of continents and cultures that can be found across the world. This cultural diversity allowed us to better understand the various practices surrounding children's rights. Besides the cultural diversity, we all had different professional or academic background; some of us had already worked, whereas others had just graduated. The experience of the cohort was diverse and enabled some rich discussion and a multidisciplinary approach. The course content was also rich and varied, and covered a large scale of themes such as child's migration, juvenile justice, children and digital technologies but also children and economic, social and cultural rights.

Who taught us and what were the networking opportunities?

The excellence of the program is also due to the professionalism and rich knowledge of the professors. These experts provide us with their time, experience and network, inviting prestigious international experts from all around the world such as Alfred de Zayas, Jaap Doek or Bernadine Dohrn, but also domestic experts such as children's ombudsman and national prosecutors. These meetings were precious not only for the valuable contribution of knowledge but it also allowed us to network with professionals for future job prospects. Personally, it is because of the LLM in International Children's Rights that I am currently interning at the General Secretariat of International Social Service. Our program included a one week visit to Geneva, during which we attended some sessions of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and meeting with NGOs such as UNICEF, Plan International, Defence for Children and International Social Service. Since the beginning of my studies, private international law was one of my main fields of interests and thus I naturally applied for the latter organisation.

How did the course help with my current work?

It is now been six months that I have worked with the fabulous team of International Social Service. The skills which I acquired during my year in Leiden have enabled me to competently and efficiently accomplish the tasks that have been assigned and to integrate well into the team. This is one of the many benefits which the high-quality course of private international law coordinated by Julia SLOTH-NIELSEN and Machteld VONK has given me.

To conclude, I can only recommend this master's program, as it rigorously molds you for a professional career and links to various job opportunities linked to children's rights. To those who are still hesitating, you will not regret your investment during this challenging and fruitful year.

Where can I get further information?

More information can be found on the website of the program:

<http://en.mastersinleiden.nl/programmes/international-childrens-rights/en/introduction> and/or by

contacting Esther Uiterweerd at childrensrights@LAW.leidenuniv.nl . To learn more about the child law department of Leiden University please visit the following link

<https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/law/institute-of-private-law/child-law>.