



CCBE Info *Special Edition*

European Lawyers Day

Everyone has the freedom to express their ideas, without permission or restriction, even when they are different, even if they shock. This freedom is one of the great legacies of the 20th Century. To have neither your freedom, your life nor those close to you lives' endangered when you express a contradiction or a disagreement. To have the right to express your criticisms, to denounce abuses, to protest against injustices, to claim a freedom provided by democracy, without fear of retaliation. That is freedom of expression.

Patrick Henry, Chair of CCBE Human Rights Committee

The purpose of this special edition newsletter is to highlight just some of the events that happened throughout Europe marking both European Lawyers Day and International Human Rights Day. Some of the material provided by the CCBE included a **speech (video) by CCBE President Maria Ślęzak**, and a **written testimony by Olivier Morice**, a French lawyer heavily involved in the defence of freedom of expression. We would like to thank all those who organised an event and hope that this will continue for years to come.

To find out more about the activities organised on European Lawyers Day go to www.ccbe.eu/lawyersday



Olivier Morice

HIGHLIGHTS OF SOME OF THE EVENTS THAT CELEBRATED EUROPEAN LAWYERS DAY

The [Austrian Bar](#) held, together with the Austrian Association of Judges, a press conference on the 9th of December 2015.

In [Belgium](#), the Mons Bar, in conjunction with [Avocats.be](#) and La Libre Belgique, organised a debate on “Freedom of expressions- what are its limits?” Participating in this debate were professors, lawyers and journalists who came together for an extremely productive and interesting evening.

In [Bulgaria](#), the [Supreme Bar Council of Bulgaria](#) decided to celebrate this year together with the Bar College of Veliko Tarnovo, as it coincided with the 115-anniversary of the founding of the latter’s Bar Council. Their guests were the President of the Bulgarian Parliament, the Presidents of the Supreme Court of Cassation and Supreme Administrative Court, and the Ministry of Justice.

The [Croatian Bar Association](#) organised a Round table discussion in Zagreb. The speakers discussed the important question of «Freedom of expression». The Croatian Bar Association invited all Croatian lawyers, as well as representatives of the judiciary, political and public life of Croatia to take part in this event.



Debate in Mons

The [Czech Bar Association](#) were particularly active this year, they provided a translated version of the official Handbook for the ELD and organised a colloquium, in Brno. They also published an article about the ELD in the official Czech Bar Journal. There were interviews on regular and online TV channels. There were also other articles in general public newspapers (not targeted solemnly on lawyers) including an article on the freedom of speech commented by the Members of the Parliament.

In [Finland](#), the [Finnish Bar](#) organised a legal aid concert.

In [Greece](#), the [Athens Bar Association](#) organized, at the ritual room of the Athens Bar Association, a discussion on “The freedom of expression, particularly in relation to the practice of the legal profession”.



Croatian High Tribunals Judges, Zagreb University Rector and Me Robert Travaš, in Zagreb



Jim Clarken, CEO of Oxfam Ireland

In **Ireland**, there was an address by Jim Clarken, CEO of Oxfam Ireland on the theme “Right to be heard” A photographic display: ‘Make them Visible’, kindly provided by Oxfam- 15 images and 15 pieces of writing was on show, highlighting the lives of displaced people and refugees.

In **Italy**, the [CNE](#) organised an event which included a video call with the President of the Turkish Bars Association Metin Feyzioğlu and with the Conseil

National des Barreaux de France, and speeches from human rights defenders around the world.

In **Lithuania**, on 3 December the [Advocates of Lithuania](#) marched through the Central Avenue of city. This parade was on behalf all people who died for justice. It was called “The Flame of Justice” and was organised in Lithuania first time. Advocates also held lectures on the profession, and there was a basketball tournament and a conference.



Advocates of Lithuania



The debate at the headquarter of the Polish Press Agency, Warsaw

In **Poland**, the [National Council of Legal Advisers](#) and the [Supreme Bar Council](#) organised a debate in the historical building that used to be the Central Office of Censorship of the Polish Communist Party in Warsaw which saw many legal practitioners - legal advisers, advocates and other legal professions as well as journalists attend. One of the guests was the President of the National Council of Legal Advisers alongside other prominent lawyers, who have recently been involved in court cases on the freedom of speech. The topic of the debate was: "Freedom of speech – its extent and boundaries".

On 10 and 11 December, the [National Association of Romanian Bars](#) and the National Institute of Advocates organised a conference on freedom of expression attended by representatives of the government, judges, prosecutors, members of the Council and the Standing Committee UNBR.

The **Slovak Bar Council** decided to host an essay competition for law students and trainee lawyers, the topic being "Freedom of expression".

The winner will be awarded a cash price, publication of the essay in the Bulletin and an invitation to New Year's meeting of lawyers.

In **Slovenia**, the Humanitarian Fund of the [Slovenian Bar](#) decided on the annual distribution of funds and handed-over financial assistance to people in need.

In the **United Kingdom**, the [Law Society of England and Wales](#) and the [Bar Council](#) held a joint seminar on Freedom of Expression. The seminar focused on in particular the increasing number of lawyers and human rights defenders around the globe who are facing politically motivated prosecutions and unfair trials for peacefully exercising freedom of expression in the course of carrying out their professional responsibilities. This seminar raised awareness to this worrying trend as well as recognized the great work of lawyers in this field. The [Northern Ireland Law Society](#) held a talk with The Honourable Mr Justice Colton on freedom of speech. Finally, the [Faculty of Advocates](#) in Edinburgh co-hosted an event with JUSTICE Scotland on the same topic.



John Guerin, President, Mr Justice Colton, Fionnuala Connolly, Michael Robinson, Alan Hunter