



## The Vis in Belgrade: A Picture of CILE-Balkan Cooperation

by Milena Đorđević (LL.M. '02)



Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica with Milena Đorđević (LL.M. '02) and the 2007 University of Belgrade Vis Moot team.

In January 2007 I participated in the roundtable exploring the impact of a Pitt LL.M. degree on other countries ([www.law.pitt.edu/academics/cile/llmprogram/roundtable](http://www.law.pitt.edu/academics/cile/llmprogram/roundtable)). I want to summarize the impact the University of Pittsburgh School of Law has had on Serbian law students and Serbian legal society by supporting their moot court activities.

It all began seven years ago, while I was studying for my LL.M. degree in Pittsburgh as the first student given such an opportunity under the Pittsburgh-Belgrade cooperation grant. That's where I caught the "mooting bug" and got hooked on the idea to organize participation of the Belgrade team at the Willem C. Vis International Commercial Arbitration Moot, held annually in Vienna, Austria. Let me emphasize that I had no prior experience with moot courts, given that such activity was unknown to Serbian legal education.

Upon returning to Belgrade, I started working at the University of Belgrade Faculty of Law as a lecturer in international commercial law, where I met Vladimir Pavic, assistant professor in international private law. Vladimir, who was another American graduate (with LL.M. and S.J.D. degrees from the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary), was also

interested in this "moot project." However, at the time, no one paid any attention to what we were doing. Our former dean refused to back the project, and it was very difficult to explain to potential sponsors what all of this was about. If it were a boat race (a situation not that unfamiliar to us, since we both dabbled with rowing for a bit), we would have half a crew, two heavy coxes, and no boat. It was only the encouragement we got from Professors Ronald Brand and Harry Flechtner that kept us going. Luckily enough, the students were willing to get in their "racing gear" regardless of the initial financial difficulties, and the Center for International Legal Education (CILE) managed to "buy us a boat" for the race. On top of that, we had received Professors Brand and Flechtner's intellectual and moral support for our endeavors, which was the best coaching we, still inexperienced in this mooting sport, could have obtained. So we had managed to get the boat in the water and start the race with hundreds of other universities that annually gather around the Vis moot problem. After a couple of years in choppy waters where we "caught a couple of crabs," we finally managed to get into the right pace, maintain a steady rhythm, and finish third (out of 177 teams) in 2007. That

was our third participation in the final rounds of competition (in the five years of participation altogether) and the first award achieved. This year, inspired by the Blue Hills 2005 wine, the 2008 problem for the moot, we've added a couple more trophies to the trophy room. Our students secured an honorable mention for Claimant's memorandum and Jovana Stevovic, one of our students, got an honorable mention as one of the best oralists at the moot. The team qualified again for the final rounds for the fourth year in a row, after being ranked ninth after the General Rounds.

None of this seemed possible a couple of years ago. Moot courts were unknown to the Serbian system of legal education; writing legal documents in Serbian, let alone English, was rarely a part of the course curricula; and winning awards at international competitions seemed like an unreachable goal. Belgrade mooties are now local superstars. The best students we have at the faculty are queuing up to get a taste of the moot; they have something to galvanize their efforts and motivate them for extra work. The whole team gets appraisals from our legal community and even from government officials (last year's team was received by both the president and the prime minister of Serbia); students





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appear on prime time TV news and are featured in the most prominent newspapers. The majority of past Vis mooties are now pursuing graduate legal degrees all around Europe and the rest of the world with ease and often with full funding. Those who focus on legal practice rather than on academic work are now employed by the most prestigious corporate law and consulting firms in Serbia. Top Belgrade law firms have no hesitation employing students who have completed the entire moot training process. In fact, the only problem is that there are not enough University of Belgrade mooties to fill all the vacancies. Not surprisingly, there is a feedback effect: As the former mooties are filling up the practice ranks, law offices become a reliable source of funding for the moot. Our current dean is extremely supportive and has helped incorporate mooting into the curriculum. Other faculty members have also started preparing students for other moot competitions in international criminal law, international

humanitarian law, human rights, and other subjects, so now we can proudly state that the diversity of our moot court curricula is one of the highest in the region. The next step may be to establish a moot court center in order to coordinate recruitment, fundraising, and promotion of moot activities. We have now organized a pre moot, on the weekend prior to the real thing in Vienna. The inaugural event featured 15 teams, three of which ended up as semifinalists. More importantly, three of the teams from the region attended the event in order to figure out what the moot is all about and prepare for participating this year. Needless to say, we will be organizing a pre moot again. And as a final preparation, we have the famous Nordbahn Hotel Rounds organized by the Pitt team in Vienna. Once we pass that test, we are ready for anything.

In the past six years, we have achieved more in changing the face of our faculty than we ever thought possible. I cannot overstate how important cooperation with

CILE has been in achieving all of this. We could never have done all of this and come this far without the support of Pitt's law school, and Professors Brand and Flechtner in particular. This cooperation has had a real impact on the way in which our curriculum and general approach to teaching has progressed, and has helped our faculty and students better understand American legal culture and legal reasoning.

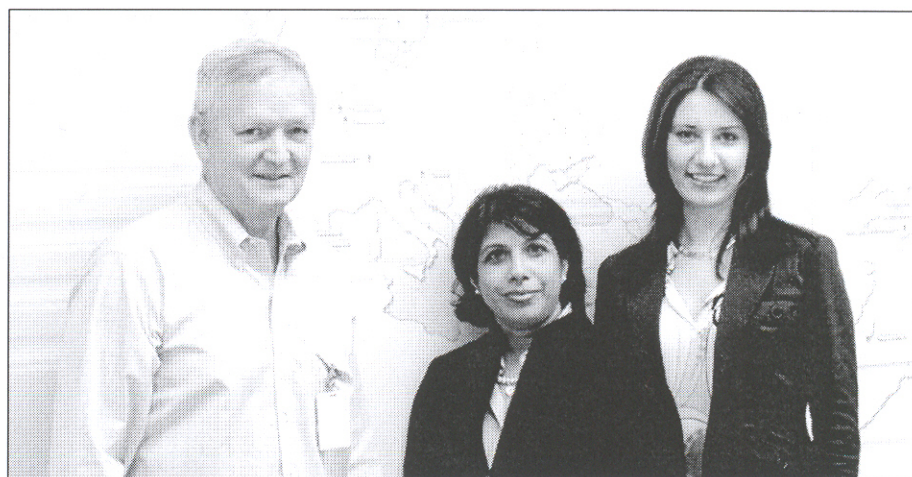
Despite the fact that U.S. state department funds for the CILE-Belgrade cooperation have long since run out, we are certain we will continue our cooperation and that the personal relationships we have established cannot be broken. I thank the whole faculty of Pitt's law school for the valuable support we have enjoyed. It has changed the careers and professional experience of many a student and teacher in Belgrade and has produced great results. I believe there is still more to come.

## Adding a Touch of Serbia to Westinghouse

By Natasa Lalatovic (LL.M. '08)

The opportunity to attend the LL.M. program for foreign law graduates at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law appeared right after I graduated from the University of Belgrade School of Law in Serbia. I was very excited to spend a year in another country, learning about a new culture and a different legal system. The Pitt LL.M. program, however, exceeded all my expectations. In addition to a challenging curriculum, the program included visits to legal institutions in Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C., sports, theaters, holidays with American families, and other out-of-class activities. It gave us a real sense of the American way of living.

However, what the Center for International Legal Education has to offer to its international students does not end here. After graduation, students are offered summer internships in law firms and companies matching their interests. I started my summer internship at Westinghouse Electric Company. The focus of my LL.M. was international business law, and



(Left to right): Westinghouse Senior Vice President and General Counsel Ramsey Coates, Senior Counsel Monica Deoras, and Natasa Lalatovic (LL.M. '08).

Westinghouse was the place to be for my area of interest. I was actively involved in international projects and worked with knowledgeable, professional lawyers who were willing to share their experience, give advice, and discuss and answer all my questions. It is truly an inspiring business environment. But the story does not end here, either. At the end of my summer

internship, I was offered the opportunity to stay and work for Westinghouse for another year. What I thought was already an exquisite experience provided by Pitt's LL.M. program has opened even more doors and created new opportunities that will change my life.