



HARVARD LAW SCHOOL
ASSOCIATION OF EUROPE

HLSA of Europe: yet another unforgettable annual meeting in the heart of Europe!

From May 17 to 20, 2012, alumnae and alumni from 22 countries gathered in Zurich, Switzerland, for this year's annual meeting of the Harvard Law School Association of Europe and reignited for a week-end the spirit of Cambridge on the shores of Lake Zurich.

Over 100 participants took part in the official program on Saturday, which was launched by two representatives of our *alma mater*, **Prof. Urs Gasser** and **Prof. John Palfrey**, both from the Berkman Center for Internet & Society. Their presentations on the evolution of knowledge management in the legal field offered conclusive evidence that for the "born digital"¹ law students (and practitioners...) of today, the concept of a law school library has expanded far beyond the dusty bookshelves most of us called home during our law studies.

This year's half-day business meeting also featured a panel discussion on the EU's relationship with small countries. This is arguably a highly relevant topic in the current circumstances, whether seen from a broad pan-European perspective or through somewhat narrower Swiss lenses. The panellists included **Prof. Daniel Thürer** and **Jean Russotto** (LLM '65), who are both assisting the Swiss government in steering the Swiss barge through the tumultuous EU waters. Further members of the panel were **Heleri Tammiste** (LLM '09, senior associate at the law firm Lawin in Tallin, Estonia) and **Antonio Leitão Amaro** (LLM '08, member of the Portuguese Parliament) who provided a fascinating overview of the ups and downs of their countries' relationship with the EU during the last decade. Despite being at the geographical fringe of the continent, Estonia and Portugal are at the core of the current turmoil: the first chose to swap its *kroon* for the Euro in 2011 (!) and the second, home country of the president of the EU Commission, is currently subject to an austerity plan triggered by an EU-led financial assistance program. The panel was completed with representatives from three Swiss cantons, namely **Prof. Anne Peters** (LLM '95, professor of public law at the University of Basel), **Alexander Nikitine** (LLM '04, associate at the Swiss firm Homburger in Zurich) and **Philipp Fischer** (LLM '09, associate at the Swiss firm Lenz & Staehelin in Geneva). Their comments showed that 40 years after the signature of a Switzerland-EU Free-Trade Agreement and 20 years after Swiss voters vetoed their country's membership in the European Economic Area, the relationship between Switzerland and the EU continues to be the "elephant in the room" of

1 Borrowed from John Palfrey / Urs Gasser, *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives*, New York 2008.

Swiss foreign affairs and is likely to trigger a substantial amount of diplomatic exchanges between Bern and Brussels in the coming years.

Another small country in the heart of Europe was featured prominently during the Saturday night dinner. One could not have hoped for a more qualified speaker on the topic of the fate of the Euro than **Luc Frieden** (LLM '88), a fellow alumnus who, in his capacity as Luxembourg's Treasury and Budget Minister (1998 to 2009) and Finance Minister (since 2009), has accompanied the single currency since its inception. His remarks offered valuable food for thoughts to the participants enjoying a dinner that was fully in line with the history of its location: the dinner event was indeed held in the scintillating *Zunftthaus zur Meisen*, the headquarters of the *Zunft zum Winlütten* (the guild of the innkeepers). The dinner was not the end of the evening for the younger alumnae and alumni, who danced until well after midnight, first in the grand ballroom of the *Zunftthaus zur Meisen*, before relocating to the highly acclaimed *Kaufleuten* club. This annual meeting was indeed marked by a very high turnout of young members of the HLSA of Europe. More than a third of the participants had graduated from HLS during the last 10 years, with the (most recent) class of 2011 being represented in Zurich by not fewer than 6 alumni.



This extended week-end in "Downtown Switzerland" (as Zurich used to brand itself) was rounded off by a remarkable sightseeing program, which included a dinner on top of the *Uetliberg* (the mountain overlooking Zurich), visits of the Swiss National Museum and of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) headquarters, a cruise on Lake Zurich to the scenic City of Rapperswil and a tour of the unique Emil Georg Bührle Foundation. This foundation, located in an ordinary-looking building in the suburbs of Zurich, hosts one of the world's most important private collections of European art. The museum – which is opened to the public on rare occasions only – displays an impressive array of French Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings, including Renoir's *La petite Irène* and one of Monet's *Water Lilies*. One could not have found a better epilogue for an unforgettable week-end. As one participant put it: "Program, venues, food and speakers were simply perfect!"

