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**– President of ELFA–**

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**President's Letter  
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The European Law Faculties Association (ELFA) will host its annual general assembly and conference from the 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> March in Münster, Germany. The main topic of the conference will be "The Unity of Research and Teaching". In addition, there will be sessions on the following three subjects: "Private Law: Reforming the Law of Obligations in Europe", Public Law: Financial Crisis in Europe" and "Legal Clinics: Legal Clinics – Exchange of experiences". A further section will be held together with leading representatives of the Association of American Law Schools (AALS) and will compare the American and European perspectives on the unity of research and teaching in an attempt to draw common conclusions.

**I. New challenges for law faculties**

My invitation to this gathering of representatives from over 200 law faculties from across Europe in one of Germany's most beautiful university cities is combined with the reference to the new challenges facing law faculties and which we shall discuss at the conference. The ELFA Board has selected "unity of research and teaching" as the main topic of the annual conference in order to raise the awareness in law faculties and, furthermore, in the public sphere of these central aspects of legal education, the identity of law faculties and the development of a modern legal system. The unity of research and teaching in the field of law is not a matter of course everywhere; at present they rather appear to be endangered. A contributing factor is, inter alia, the limited financial resources – particularly during the present financial crisis – which can strengthen the temptation to make legal education "cheaper" by no longer combining it with legal research. This can arise through the establishment of "law schools" which lack the resources for academic work and research-orientated staff (or correspondingly by a reduction of funds for present law faculties). A similar effect occurs if professors and other teaching staff at law faculties are paid so little that they are forced to seek other employment, primarily outside of the university, and can thus not dedicate themselves to research. Such tendencies can be seen, for example, since the 1990s in a number of central and Eastern European countries. However, they are not limited to such countries and could, in light of the financial crisis, spread.

Furthermore, with respect to the "unity of research and teaching" there are new challenges faced by the apparent increase in the number of institutions that exist alongside traditional law faculties yet adopt only some aspects of legal education (and which, in part, focus on aspects of commercial interest) For example, this in-



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cludes private or public institutions that, where legal education is concerned, concentrate on offering a bachelor degree in a specialised field (such as business law), or which only offer specialised courses of study for post-graduate students (for instance the possibility to obtain a Dr. or Ph.D. title). In this respect the question can be posed of the position law faculties should adopt vis-à-vis such institutions and programmes and, in addition, the significance these have for the unity of research and teaching.

## **II. The identity of law faculties**

The effects of such developments and problems are not only present in the national context. If one considers the increasing possibilities of mobility for students and law graduates in Europe, one can note that many further challenges result for the European context. Ultimately, these lead to the question of whether, and how, a comparable profile of law faculties and other institutions engaging in legal education and the corresponding quality of legal studies in Europe can be obtained (beyond the rather formal framework offered by the Bologna model).

Where European law faculties are concerned, one can see that an urgent task is the exchange of views on their own identity, on the profile of the law faculties in the present environment and on the role accorded to the unity of research and teaching. The annual ELFA conference in Münster shall primarily serve as a forum for such an exchange. On this basis, the European Law Faculties Association shall strive to include other academic institutions and associations, and legal practice organisations in the discussion on the significance of law faculties in society and their contribution to the development of national and European law. Moreover, the ELFA conference shall aim at raising public understanding of the challenges law faculties have to overcome with appropriate facilities for teaching and research.

## **III. “The Unity of Research and Teaching” – Conference 2013**

The annual ELFA conference, to be held from the 14-16<sup>th</sup> March 2013, will thus discuss the general topic of “unity of research and teaching” in four plenary sessions. The speakers include renowned academics, legal practitioner and politicians (i.a. Prof. Dr. Martin Selmayr, head of cabinet for the vice-president of the European Commission, Viviane Reding; Prof. Dr. Jo Shaw, University of Edinburgh; Prof. Dr. Guido Alpa, head of the Italian Bar Association; Prof. Dr. Patrick Sensburg, Chair of the subcommittee for European Law, German Bundestag). Further information is available in the attached conference programme.

The tradition-rich city of Münster (located in northwest Germany and often referred to as the “German Oxford”) and its prestigious university (one of the largest in central Europe) will provide a just setting for the meeting of law faculty representatives from across Europe. Further information about the city, its university and travel are available online under: [www.elfa-afde.eu](http://www.elfa-afde.eu) or [www.uni-muenster.de](http://www.uni-muenster.de).



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#### **IV. Invitation to the conference in Münster**

It is with great pleasure that I kindly invite you to participate at this important meeting of European law faculties, to contribute your views to the general theme and to the specific sections and to use this wonderful opportunity to exchange ideas with your European colleagues. Furthermore, at the General Assembly the ELFA members will not only have the opportunity to elect a new President, Vice-president and Board Members but will also decide on changes to the Articles of Association and future projects (further information can be found in the invitation to the General Assembly).

This invitation to the annual conference and its discussions is not only extended to the more than 200 ELFA members but also to every law faculty that is not a member yet is affected equally by the present challenges and problems. Your contribution is also important for our future activities. If you wish to participate at the annual conference please note on the attached registration form whether you initially want to learn more about our work or whether your faculty wants to become a member and be entitled to vote at the conference. Further information about ELFA is available via the ELFA homepage: [www.elfa-afde.eu](http://www.elfa-afde.eu). In addition, I would be more than happy to provide you with any additional information ([reiner.schulze@uni-muenster.de](mailto:reiner.schulze@uni-muenster.de)). The ELFA secretariat can be contacted under [elfa@elfa-afde.eu](mailto:elfa@elfa-afde.eu).

It would give me considerable pleasure to be able to welcome you, or a representative of your faculty, to the annual conference in Münster and to work together, within the framework of the European Law Faculties Association, in the search for answers to the pressing questions for law faculties in Europe.

Münster, 30th January 2013

Reiner Schulze