



Laidlaw Scholars Undergraduate Leadership and Research Programme
Record of Reflection

**Turning Passion into Comparative Legal Research: Reflections on
Uncertainty and Growth**

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Reflection

Finishing my research report on the project "Regulating LGBTQ+ Visibility through Child Protection and Media Law: A comparative doctrinal analysis of Russia, Hungary and Bulgaria under EU legal frameworks" has left me with mixed feelings. On one hand, I feel a sense of pride and accomplishment for completing the project and gaining a deeper, academically grounded understanding of an issue I have long been interested in, not simply as an academic question but also as a matter of personal significance to me.

I distinctly remember when, at the age of 15, I was sitting in a chilly carriage of the Budapest metro reading the news on my phone when I came across an unsettling article titled 'Hungary passes law banning LGBTQ content in school or kid's TV' on The Guardian. My heart sank. For the rest of the journey, I thought that the legislation would definitely have to be repealed when the European Union and the broader international community step in to intervene and prevent this discriminatory policy from being put into practice. Although I subsequently saw the measure being condemned online, I could not understand why affirmative steps have not been taken against it.

By the end of the research period, I feel that I would be able to confidently answer these questions posed by my fifteen-year-old self. I feel particularly content knowing I arrived at those conclusions through a methodology I largely have designed myself after conducting an extensive literature review. I believe the project effectively captures the essence of the issue and provides useful insight into how diffusion could occur under EU legal frameworks. In doing so, it sheds light on the constraints of EU harmonization and enforcement mechanisms and suggests potential steps policymakers could take to respond to the Russia-inspired regulations.

On the other hand, however, I remain conscious that I was unable to deliver a sufficiently specific policy recommendation to address this issue definitively. While I recognize that expecting to resolve a persistent political, social and legal challenge faced by the European Union as a first-year undergraduate student has been idealistic, I feel the methodology I designed and, consequently, the conclusions and implications of the study have several limitations that could have been addressed had I had more time and more extensive training in legal research and comparative methods.

Although I do not consider my project entirely successful, I view these gaps as both an opportunity and a source of motivation to improve. One of the project's most important lessons was that answers and solutions in the field of law are not always straightforward or definitive. For instance, Bulgaria occupies a legal grey area, but Hungary's position is also complex. Recognizing these complexities made me interested in learning more about the legal structures involved and combined with my passion for the subject, reaffirmed my commitment to pursuing legal studies in the future. I hope to acquire the skills needed to provide a more concrete answer to the questions of this kind and possibly to implement an effective course of action.

Additionally, gauging how much I still do not know further ignited my passion for learning and enhanced my excitement for the remainder of my undergraduate and postgraduate studies and my eventual professional career alike. Throughout the literature review and the analysis, I have also identified several related areas of inquiry I would be thrilled to investigate through future research.

Throughout this research journey I had the opportunity to work with my supervisor, an amazing academic and human being whose support, guidance and kindness I will always be grateful for. I was also fortunate enough to be able to connect and discuss my project with a prominent scholar in the field, whose work played a significant role in the development of the research question. Besides enhancing my interpersonal skills and refining my ability to work, communicate and operate in an academic setting and alongside established professionals, I have also grown immensely as a person.

The research process required me to navigate several unexpected difficulties. At one stage, the project was several weeks delayed as a result of being unable to make a purchase due to restrictions affecting international payments. At another, I had to construct a methodology for textual comparison when the literature I could locate was only tangentially relevant to the analysis I planned to conduct. Dealing with these challenges strengthened my abilities as an individual, a researcher and a leader, which is one of the most important objectives of the Laidlaw Scholars Programme. I became better at being able to persevere under pressure, being more adaptable, working proactively but asking for help when needed, designing something on my own instead of following a paved pathway and transforming my passion for a subject and an issue into sustained effort. Lastly, I am now more confident in my ability to recognize the limitations of my knowledge and continue with my work even when neither the method nor the answer is immediately apparent.