

AAEDAT: The permanent network of international relations on environmental matters at the Universitat Rovira i Virgili

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The Strategic Internationalisation Plan of the Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV) envisages a greater internationalisation of URV Master's degrees and a greater influx of international postgraduate students. In the context of an increasingly closer interrelationship in the academic world on a global scale, universities must position themselves internationally, especially when it comes to postgraduate studies, where the most skilled and competitive professionals are trained and where researchers begin their careers. For this reason, one of our objectives at the URV is to internationalize our educational programmes to attract international students and to internationalize the students, PAS (administration and services staff) and PDI (teaching and research staff) of the URV, especially at the postgraduate level.

In this context, the Master's Degree in Environmental Law has become a benchmark programme thanks to the high level of internationalization of its students. Since it began, in academic year 2006/07, the Master's Degree in Environmental Law has experienced strong demand from beyond our borders. Numerous students from

1. This article has been written by the following members of AAEDAT: Stephanie V. Ascensio Serrato, Beatriz Felipe Pérez, Daniel Iglesias Márquez, Lorena Martínez Hernández, Itzel Ramos Olivares and Isabel Vilaseca Boixareu.

all over the world and particularly from Latin America (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Salvador and Paraguay), Italy and Andorra have chosen the URV's Master's Degree in Environmental Law as their specialized international training programme. In 2014 the Master's was awarded the "International Master's Programme" quality assurance label by the Agency for Management of University and Research Grants of the Generalitat de Catalunya (autonomous government of Catalonia) in recognition of its high quality and international projection.

The Students and Former Students Association of Environmental Law in Tarragona (AAEDAT) has played an important role in the development of the Master's. AAEDAT was created under the umbrella of the Master's Degree in Environmental Law and the Tarragona Centre for Environmental Law Studies (CEDAT), both of which are affiliated to the URV. Thanks to the creation of this Association, the internationalization of the Master's programme is beginning to generate results in the research field, with the incorporation of graduates from the Master's as interns in the Department of Public Law and CEDAT and the registration of doctoral theses by international students. The impact the Master's has had on the internationalisation and international visibility of our research as well as on knowledge transfer in the field of Environmental Law at the URV is clear.

This Association is proof that the concept of internationalization goes beyond mere student mobility and the signing of international agreements. Its well-structured organisation facilitates the fluid exchange of information between students and former students of various geographical origins and professional profiles.

The students and former students of the URV are essential references for the quality of university studies in Environmental Law. This permanent connection between students, former students and the university allows important information about activities, job offers, conferences and publications, etc. to be freely disseminated. Even more importantly, it allows the URV's Master's Degree in Environmental Law to be projected beyond our borders.

For this reason, AAEDAT is a permanent structure that helps to maintain our association with students and former students (networking), monitors their professional careers, invites them to participate in future activities (formation) and, through national and international entities with which CEDAT and the Master's in Environmental Law maintain institutional relations, informs them of employment offers in the field of Environmental Law (professionalization).

1. Background to the creation of AAEDAT: creating a network

On the 27th October 2009, the Students and Former Students Association of Environmental Law in Tarragona (AAEDAT) was created by students and former students of the Master's in Environmental Law of the URV's Faculty of Legal Sciences who wished to set up the first not-for-profit alumni association with its own legal status.

The premise behind the initiative was that the loyalty of former Master's students is earned while they are still students of the university. If those who have already graduated felt their time spent at University was unsatisfactory, earning their loyalty would prove very difficult. AAEDAT aims to create an interface, therefore, between the culmination of the students' Master's programme and the beginning of their professional careers so that their link with the University does not break.

On this point we should remember that American university systems have vast experience in maintaining institutional relations with their graduates, making such relations a source of great benefit for the university. In return, their graduates establish an ongoing, personal connection with their universities and their needs and interests are important for the institutions that trained them professionally. This idea, and the lack of Master's and former student associations, mean that AAEDAT is good praxis that deserves recognition and may be extended to other degrees at the URV.

2. Description: awareness, training and professionalization

The purpose of this alumni association is to create ties between the students and former students of the Master's. In addition, according to the statutes of the association, it also has the following objectives:

1. Satisfy common interests in order to promote scientific knowledge of the environment and apply this knowledge for the benefit of the community.
2. Promote and maintain a network of relations and professional exchanges between people who have studied Environmental Law at the URV.
3. Contribute to the dissemination of the objectives of the URV's Tarragona Centre for Environmental Law Studies as a Catalan public entity of advanced university research and promote and publicise the activities of that entity and its groups whenever they are in agreement with the established objectives.
4. Foster collaboration with other university groups and encourage the creation of common spaces for debate and reflection.
5. Find mechanisms for establishing relations with society, as represented by entities and social, cultural, political and economic organisms.
6. Organise activities and provide services for its members.

The coordinators of the Master’s in Environmental Law therefore aim to cultivate AAEDAT’s international projection, promote the development of academic networks in Environmental Law, and organise university activities with the participation of researchers, teachers and students. Other aims are to promote international exchange and the continuous learning of Environmental Law and to ensure that the Faculty of Legal Sciences and CEDAT become recognised as centres of reference in the field of Environmental Law.

This projection is illustrated by the list of AAEDAT members, of whom at present there are 78, including 50 from outside Spain (see Table 1). Since it began, the Association has managed not only to consolidate its networking activities but also to help maintain the link between former students and the University.

Table n.1. Members of the AAEDAT

	Country	Number
1	Andorra	1
2	Argentina	3
3	Bolivia	3
4	Brazil	6
5	Chile	6
6	Colombia	8
7	Costa Rica	1
8	El Salvador	1
9	Ecuador	4
10	Spain	28
11	Iran	2
12	Mexico	8
13	Paraguay	1
14	Peru	5
15	Dominican Republic	1
	TOTAL	78

Source: AAEDAT

The Association uses several channels of communication, including e-mail, blogs and social networks such as Facebook and LinkedIn, to transmit important information, publicise the activities of its members for the university community and wider society, and contact other organisations and social groups to organise joint events or activities.

Via these media, Master's students, former students, and teachers can continuously share information, experiences, and employment opportunities, etc.

Like other alumni associations, AAEDAT offers numerous services, including training resources to inform members about the range of University outreach and postgraduate programmes. It canvasses the training needs of its members and may also design courses on an *ad hoc* basis. It plays important roles in other continuous training programmes and the training needs observatory and has a service that provides contacts and relations (including directories and social networks) that facilitate communication between its members. It also has an information and current affairs service that incorporates several resources, including a website, a blog and a newsletter, to inform members about the activities of the University and the Association and about topics related to Environmental Law.

In general, AAEDAT promotes numerous actions among its members including: organising conferences and seminars, exchanging ideas and experiences in the field of environmental protection and its legal regulations; promoting all manner of services and social and cultural activities that encourage members to get to know each other better; improving training generally; and cooperating with CEDAT to further the continuous training of former students and members of other sectors involved in environmental management.

3. Activities to defend and protect the environment beyond our frontiers

Since it was established, AAEDAT has organised and conducted a wide range of activities devised in line with its objectives. As the association is closely linked to the URV, most of its activities, including regular meetings and academic activities, are conducted at the University's facilities, usually in Seminar room 1 of the Faculty of Legal Sciences at Campus Catalunya.

One example of AAEDAT's role as a mediator for fostering relations between international Master's students and former students is its organisation of seminars and international colloquia that help to establish closer academic, professional and personal relations at an international level. One of the most important recent events was the first Tarragona International Environmental Law Colloquium (TIEC).²

Below we briefly describe the purpose and objectives of the main types of activities that have so far been conducted by AAEDAT. The activities are: Green

² Visit the official website at: <<https://tiec2016.wordpress.com//>>.

Sessions, Environment Colloquia, day conferences on Environmental Law-related matters, field trips, competitions, and other activities intended to promote awareness and solidarity.

3.1 Green Sessions

Green Sessions comprise the screening of documentaries on local and international socio-environmental problems in different countries. These documentaries help to disseminate information about topics related to the protection of nature and human rights.

The aim of these documentaries is to enable students on the URV's Master's in Environmental Law and other AAEDAT members to inform the rest of the university community and society at large about social, legal and environmental matters in various parts of the world.

At the beginning of each session, a member of AAEDAT introduces the topic and briefly reviews the material to be presented. When the documentary finishes, a debate ensues in which attendees can air any ideas, doubts and concerns that the documentary may have generated.

This type of activity began in 2011 with the first screening of the documentary "Searching for the Land of Those who Live", which deals with the exploitation of refugees on the Colombian-Venezuelan border. The documentary was introduced by Rodolfo Jesus González Paz.

In 2012 a documentary on the problem of waste, "Garbage Warrior", was shown. On this occasion the introduction was done by Stephanie Ascencio Serrato. Other documentaries shown in 2012 were "Yasuní, Good Living" and "The Sarayaku Case", both of which were produced by Arturo Hortas, who works on the Ecological Justice Organization Liability and Trade (EJOLT) project. Both documentaries address the complexity of environmental problems in Ecuador in relation to extractive activities.



Source: AAEDAT

In 2013 a documentary on food waste entitled “The Gleaners and I” was screened. The debate was led by Núria Ruiz Morillas, a tenured lecturer in Inorganic Chemistry at the URV.

Finally, in 2015-16 two documentaries were shown. The first of these was “Disruption Climate Change” on the problem of climate change and the search for solutions. The debate was led by Stephanie Ascencio, a PhD student and former student on the Master’s in Environmental Law. The second was “Contrasts of Oil Exploitation”, which narrated the history of oil exploitation in Ecuador, discussed its adverse environmental and socioeconomic effects, explained how different policies on hydrocarbon extraction have developed in that country, and described the Yasuní-ITT initiative. The activity was conducted in collaboration with the Catalan Engineers Without Borders association (ESF), which promoted the documentary.

3.2 Environmental Colloquiums

Environment Colloquiums are a space to debate and discuss any topic related to current environmental, sociocultural and political affairs. They were created as an extracurricular activity and are generally led by students of the URV Master’s in Environmental Law. The students make a presentation on a topic of their choice, which is usually related to an environmental problem that is particularly relevant to their country of origin. Sometimes an expert is invited to discuss a current topic of common interest to AAEDAT members in particular and to society in general. At the end of the presentation, participants share their experiences and perspectives to enrich each other’s knowledge.

The colloquiums were the first activities instigated by the Association and are the ones that have had the greatest success in terms of the number of events and participation. Below we briefly describe each of the colloquiums that have been held since 2009.

The title of the first colloquium, organised in 2009 by Andrea Arteaga, a former student on the Master's in Environmental Law, was "The Galapagos, Human Kind's First Natural Heritage, now Endangered". This colloquium stressed the importance of the Galapagos Islands for diversity and genetic research and highlighted the dangers they are facing.

In 2009 three colloquiums were held. The first of these, "The Private Reserves of Brazil's Natural Heritage", was organised by Gabriela Fauth and Rafael Oliveira, both Brazilian former students of the Master's. The aim of this colloquium was to analyse the legal regime in the private reserves of Brazil's natural heritage, the challenges it faces, and the advantages it has. The second colloquium, "The New Constitution of Bolivia: an Evolution from Anthropocentrism to Biocentrism?"; was organised by former student Paola Villavicencio Calzadilla, from Bolivia, who gave a critical analysis of Bolivia's Constitution, the first constitution in the world to attempt to change the paradigm and adopt a biocentrist vision. The third colloquium, "The public transport system of Bogota: Bogota, winner of the Golden Lion Award", was organised by Benjamín Galeano, a Colombian former student on the Master's. This colloquium addressed the problem of transportation in large cities such as Bogota and the solution that was adopted there.

In 2011 the colloquium "Federalism and Environmental Policies in Latin America: the Situation in Argentina" was organised by Mariano Cirone from Argentina and a former student on the Master. This colloquium, presented a critical view of the challenges faced by the federal system for designing and implementing an effective environmental policy that would respond to the need for protection and sustainable management of natural resources in Argentina.

In the same year, former student Isabel Vilaseca Boixareu presented the colloquium "The Micos Beach Resort Project of Bahía de Tela in Honduras. An Unsustainable Model of Tourism". The colloquium focused on the tourist boom and the effects of development models based on unsustainable tourism in developing countries, with special reference to Honduras.

Also in 2011, the colloquium "The Right to Access Environmental Justice: the Creation of the Environmental Courts in Chile" was organised by Carolina Riquelme, a Chilean former student on the Master's. This colloquium questioned whether environmental courts constitute, by themselves, a real contribution to the implementation of the right to access environmental justice.

Finally, at the end of 2011, Juan Claudio Arenas, a Colombian former student of the Master's presented a colloquium on "The Environment in the Columbian Constitution: The Ecological Constitution". The aim of this colloquium was to analyse the Columbian Constitution of 1991, which introduced mechanisms for protecting citizens' fundamental rights through the tutelage action, the popular action for collective rights, and the action of unconstitutionality to verify concordance between the law and the constitution, with special reference to the stipulations of the Constitution on matters pertaining to the environment.

Two colloquiums were held in 2012. The first of these, entitled "The Yasuní-ITT Initiative: An initiative to Mitigate Climate Change?", was presented by Ecuadorian former student Malka San Lucas Ceballos, who explained the positive aspects and the weaknesses of the Ecuadorian initiative to leave the oil below ground. The second, entitled "The Canaries: Fortunate Islands? Environmental Characteristics, Threats and Alternatives", was presented by former student Beatriz Felipe Pérez, who addressed the negative consequences of mass tourism on the fragile and biodiverse ecosystems of the Canary Islands.

In 2013 a colloquium was given on "Transgenic Corn and Food Sovereignty in Mexico" by Giselle García Maning, a Mexican former student on the Master's. This colloquium addressed the problems and risks – for corn diversity, food sovereignty and farmer access to land and natural resources – caused by transnational companies that introduce transgenic corn into Mexico. Also in 2013, the colloquium entitled "Environmental Impacts and the Vulnerability of Indigenous Rights: the Belo-Muntanya in Brazil and the 'Independence Aqueduct' in Sonora, Mexico" was presented by Jerónimo Basilio Sao Mateus and Itzel Ramos Olivares, from Brazil and Mexico, respectively. The aims of this colloquium was to analyse the consequences of megaprojects on indigenous communities in Brazil and Mexico and discuss the legal paths the affected people have had to follow in order to defend their rights.

Finally in 2013, a colloquium entitled "Nature as a Subject of Law in Ecuador" was presented by Fred Larreategui and Pablo Ramírez, two Ecuadorian former students of the Master's. This colloquium provided a brief overview of the changes to the constitution introduced in Ecuador after the passing of the Magna Carta via the Constitution Referendum of 28th September 2008 as well as a perspective on the regulatory, social and political context that led Ecuador to introduce this paradigmatic shift.

In 2014-2015, numerous Environmental Colloquiums were held. The first of these, entitled "Agrarian Reform in Bolivia: the Land is for Those Who Work on it", was presented by Rudy Ariel Paco Ancalle, a doctoral student and former student on

the Master's. The colloquium explained the historical context that led Bolivia to carry out an Agrarian Reform that transformed ownership structure and access to land.

Later, a colloquium on "Legal Training through Moot Courts. Experience of the First URV Team in the Fourth Inter-American Sustainable Development Law Moot Court Competition" was led by Erea Suarez Cornejo, Fred Larreategui Fabara and Patricia Melissa Sangama Suazo (members of the team that participated in the Moot Court) and team coach Isabel Vilaseca Boixareu (pre-doctoral fellow at CEDAT). The colloquium described the activities carried out at the tournament, presented the case study, and explained how the contest was structured.

The next colloquium, presented by Patricia Melissa Sagama Suazo, a Peruvian lawyer and former student of the Master's, focused on "Environmental Enforcement in Peru: History, Progress and Future Perspectives". It offered a view of the origins of environmental enforcement, its institutional development, regulation and current problems, and the new challenges Peru has to confront.

Another Peruvian student, Leonardo Paz Aparicio, presented a colloquium on the "Right of the Indigenous Peoples of Peru to Prior Consultation", in which he discussed the progress made in the application of the right to prior consultation in Peru since it passed into legislation through Agreement 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO). He also explained the criterion for the determination of indigenous peoples, the stages of prior consultation, the role of the State in the process, and the objectives that were achieved through the application of this right.

The final colloquium held in 2014-15, "Introduction to the Argentina Republic's Environmental Regulatory Framework", was presented by Gastón A. Médici, an Argentinean student on the Master's, who analysed the regulatory framework in Argentina on environmental matters, with particular reference to the "Riachuelo" case.

In 2015-16, the colloquium "Non-Visible Landscapes: an Evaluation from the Indigenous Amazonian Cosmivision of Ecuador – the Yasuní case" was presented by Paulo Carrión, who explained that geographies may not just be physical but also centres of ideologies, signs, thoughts and beliefs, etc. Another colloquium, on the "National Environmental System (SINA) of the Republic of Colombia", was presented by Daniel Tobón Aparicio, a Colombian lawyer and a student on the Master's. The colloquium described the functions, general principles, and institutional composition of the National Environmental System of the Republic of Colombia, which was created in 1993 by Law 99.

Finally, the most recent colloquium, on "Spanish Multinationals in Latin America: the Socio-environmental Impacts of the Reconquista", was presented by Daniel Iglesias Márquez, a Mexican pre-doctoral researcher at CEDAT, who gave an overview of the environmental impacts produced by the industrial activities of Spanish companies throughout Latin America.

3.3 Symposiums on current topics in Environmental Law

The aim of the symposiums is to debate current topics on Environmental Law so that students may acquire new knowledge for their own intellectual and professional enrichment.

The symposiums are led by experts from outside the URV, who make presentations on specific environmental topics before the debate is opened up to attendees. Over time and with the experience gained, the number of symposiums has begun to increase.

The first symposium was “Introduction to Ecological Agriculture”, held in 2012 and presented by Igone Saldias Uranga, a former student of the URV Master’s in Environmental Law, who explained, for example, how ecological allotments work and how ecological products can be distinguished from non-ecological products.

In 2013, two more symposiums were held. The first of these, entitled “Energy Collapse of Capitalism”, was organized by *Enginyeria Sense Fronteres* (ESF) (Engineers Without Borders) in collaboration with AAEDAT and analysed in detail the current energy system and its future possibilities. The second symposium, “Exchange Network with Social Currency: Responsible Consumption, Fair Trade and Commitment to the Environment”, was led by Roger Luis Càceres Pari, an economist, international aid worker, user and coordinator of the *Xarxa Ressò* Network in Tarragona.

At the end of 2013, the First Symposium on Animal Rights was held with a presentation on “Species Discrimination” by Antoni-Lluís Teixidó, a member of the animal rights organisation *Plataforma Iniciativa Animalista*, and a presentation on the “Legal Approach to the Animal Rights Question” by José Antonio García Saez from the Human Rights Institute of the University of Valencia. Following the presentations, a debate was led by Dr Ángeles Galiana, a lecturer in the Philosophy of Law at the URV.

In 2014-15, a symposium was held on “Environment and Energy: Lessons from Professional Practice” led by David Sanz Pérez, a partner in Garrigues-Barcelona. The aim of this symposium was to provide a theoretical and practical overview of the main procedures and topics in which energy companies require legal advice on environmental matters.

A symposium on the “Relation between the Environment and our Inner Selves” was organised by Ana María Oliva, a doctor in biomedicine, lecturer at the University of Barcelona, and director of the Ibero-American Institute of Applied Bioelectrography. At this symposium, which dealt with fields of human energy, the speaker demonstrated this reality, which is invisible to the naked eye, and the connection between these energies, the environment and human well-being.

On 7th April 2014, Valentina Thörner, a German sociologist, blogger of ValeDeOro-Sostenibilidad, and author of numerous books and manuals on minimalist philosophy, led the symposium on “Minimalist Philosophy and Environmental Protection”, in which she pointed out the lack of a wider debate on the concepts of what is necessary and ethical in consumption. The speaker asserted that the only way to include environmental protection pragmatically in our daily lives is to raise awareness and proposed minimalism as a first step on this journey.

The final symposium in 2014-15 was “The Dark Side of Globalized Agriculture. What are the impacts? What alternatives does food sovereignty provide?”, which was presented by Esther Vivas, a journalist and researcher on food and agricultural policies. The symposium questioned the current model of food production, distribution and consumption and proposed alternatives based on food sovereignty and critical consumption.

Finally, in 2015-16, the symposium entitled “Brazil: Development and Public Policies for Traditional Communities and Indigenous Peoples” was presented by sociologist and anthropologist Flávio Carvalho, who addressed biodiversity and cultural plurality in Brazil.

3.4 Field trips: discovering the regional environment

Symposiums, seminars and other training and transfer initiatives are not the only focus of the Association’s activities. Also organised are field trips to enable the students on the URV Master’s in Environmental Law and other AAEDAT members to discover areas of cultural interest and establish more direct contact with Catalonia’s natural environment. At each location visited, participants are given an explanation of local activities and their environmental, cultural and economic importance for Catalonia.

Ultimately, the main aim of these field trips is to introduce our international students to the landscape and environmental heritage of Catalonia.

AAEDAT organized the first of these field trips, to the Ebro Delta Natural Park, in 2011. There, participants visited some of the most picturesque places in the area, discovered local culture, and learned about the environmental problems the area is facing.

The following year, AAEDAT organized a trip to the Natural Park of Els Ports, where participants were taken on a tour of the park’s most important natural, cultural and economic locations by a specialist tour guide.

In 2013-14, AAEDAT organized a trip to an ecological wine cellar in the Priorat and a trip to the ecological village-cooperative “SOM Comunitat” in the province of Girona.

The last field trip was in 2015 to the Aigüestortes Natural Park and Sant Maurici lake to inform participants about the environmental protection regime in the area and raise their awareness of the Park's natural and cultural wealth.

3.5 Competitions

AAEDAT has organized competitions aimed at encouraging artistic expression linked to the protection of and sensitivity towards the environment and natural resources and to raise awareness of the value and beauty of Nature and the importance of protecting it.

One of these was the First Natural Tarragona Photography Competition, which was held in 2012. The aim was to raise awareness among the University community of the need to protect natural spaces in the province of Tarragona via photography. In 2015, the First Gastronomy and Ecology Competition: Flavour of the Environment was held to raise awareness of the relationship between the origin of food, gastronomy and nature.

The recreational nature of these activities enables awareness of the need for environmental protection to be raised not only among AAEDAT members but among the University community as a whole.



Source: AAEDAT

3.6 Activities to raise awareness and foster solidarity

AAEDAT has also promoted so-called "EcoExchanges". These are exchange markets at which students, lecturers, other members of the University community, and

society in general can exchange products they no longer use for others they find more useful. This activity promotes the recycling of objects and helps us all to reflect on the accumulation of material goods in our homes. So far, three “EchoExchanges” have been held, the last of which was on 9th June 2011 in Concòrdia Square at the URV’s Campus Catalunya.

AAEDAT has also organised “URV for Fair Trade”, one of a series of activities intended to inform people about fair trade and the advantages of the products. The visiting public was given the opportunity to buy fair trade products, invited to taste fair trade coffee in the Campus cafeteria, and explained the socio-environmental benefits of fair trade products.

4. Institutional and academic cooperation with CEDAT

As its statute explains, one of the aims of AAEDAT is to collaborate with CEDAT to organize and hold joint activities. Below we describe the numerous activities that have taken place.

As well as organizing seminars on Environmental Law topics, AAEDAT, in collaboration with CEDAT, has organized international academic events aimed at promoting the exchange of experiences and research with other universities and research centres from around the world. For example, the First Tarragona International Law Colloquium (TIEC), entitled “Rethinking Sustainable Development in Terms of Justice”, was held in 2016.

This colloquium had a major international impact on Environmental Law as it was attended by over 70 people from at least 20 different countries, including undergraduate, Master’s and PhD students as well as professors, professionals and lawyers. The aim of the colloquium was to provide Master’s and PhD students and academics in general with a venue to present and discuss their current research. In this first edition, the topics focused on sustainable development and environmental justice.

In 2015 the “Hispano-Mexican Colloquium: Current Challenges for Environment Law” was organized in collaboration with CEDAT and the Universidad Michoacana de Sant Nicolás de Hidalgo (UMSNH) of Mexico. The aim of the colloquium was to obtain a global and comparative vision of the legal responses that have been provided for various environmental problems (climate change, waste, environmental justice, waterways, etc.) and also to offer the unique opportunity to learn, interact and share ideas and experiences with academics and students from the participating universities.

In 2014 the URV and CEDAT hosted the 12th International Union for the Conservation of Nature/Academy of Environmental Law Colloquium. Over 300

participants from all over the world debated numerous energy-related topics. At this congress, AAEDAT specifically organised a seminar for doctoral students at which numerous academics were invited to make recommendations on possible career paths.

In 2013-14 and 2014-15, AAEDAT participated in the Moot Court competitions. Specifically, it was responsible for promoting, training and coordinating groups of URV Law students who participated in the fourth and fifth editions of the Inter-American Sustainable Development Law Moot Court Competition, organized by the Andes University in Colombia, the Getulio Vargas Foundation in Brazil, and the Tulane University Law School of the USA. This prestigious law competition involves a simulation of the Inter-American Human Rights Court with a hypothetical case in which a conflict is considered between a State and a group of citizens as a result of a serious violation of human rights. The characteristic of this competition is that the conflict considered at each edition aims to reflect the tension between economic development on the one hand and environmental protection and its related rights on the other – a tension that is especially acute in Latin America.

In 2013-14, the URV team was made up of three former students of the URV Master's in Environment Law: Fred Larreategui, Erea Suárez and Patricia Sangama. In 2014-15, the URV was represented by undergraduate Law student Mariam Lutfi and former Master's students David Pérez and Jordi Serra. The results of these editions were highly satisfactory both for the URV's international visibility and for the students' training.



Source: AAEDAT

5. Education and ongoing environmental research

As well as collaborating on academic events, AAEDAT and CEDAT have also conducted educational projects to promote environmental sustainability from people, by people and for people from outside the university.

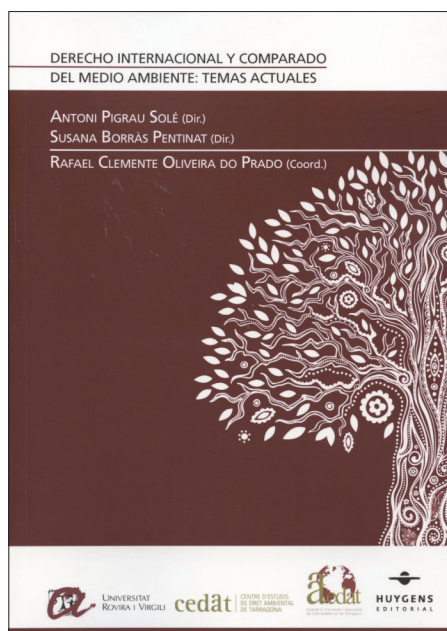
Since 2014 AAEDAT and CEDAT have collaborated on the educational project “Environmental justice: the debate for socio-environmental education. I-waste: the other face of technology”. This project began as an initiative by AAEDAT and CEDAT members to link the knowledge generated at CEDAT to different education levels, create interest among secondary schoolchildren in current social and environmental topics, and encourage these children to reflect on them. The project has involved organizing activities and workshops and preparing a dossier on environmental education topics for secondary education teachers.

AAEDAT has also collaborated with CEDAT on another educational project “Social Allotments”, donating seeds, plants and tools for planting and harvesting fruit and vegetables and tending to one of the plots on the allotment. The aims of this project are to prepare and construct an area of the URV’s Campus Catalunya and to convert it into a suitable area for planting, harvesting and collaborating with other members of society and vulnerable social groups to foster social inclusion.

In the area of research into Environmental Law, in 2014 AAEDAT cooperated with CEDAT to finance the publication by Huygens of a collective work entitled “International and Comparative Environment Law: Current Topics”, which involved the participation of students of the Master’s in Environmental Law and URV doctoral students.

The book addresses the progressive degradation of the environment as a major challenge for contemporary society and discusses processes such as deforestation, desertification and global warming due to the effect of greenhouse gases. It also addresses the levels of contamination in water, air, earth and living beings as great disorders of the ecological equilibrium between the models of production and unsustainable consumption on the one hand and environmental protection on the other. Similarly, it stresses the fact that environmental deterioration endangers both our wellbeing and our very survival.

Recent activities include the Seminars on Pre-doctoral Research, three of which have been held so far. The aim of this annual CEDAT event is to disseminate the research on environmental issues that has been conducted by doctoral students. AAEDAT collaborates with the organization of the seminars and its members participate by presenting their lines of research.



Source: AAEDAT

6. Final thoughts and the future of AAEDAT

Thanks to its experience and prolific activity, AAEDAT has successfully maintained and consolidated the loyalty of the URV's students and former students, who return to the University to continue their training on the doctorate in Environmental Law or simply make continued improvements through their contact with society. In both cases, the Association is fundamental to generating synergies that promote institutional identity and to sharing good praxis.

Structures such as AAEDAT are important because they are the instrument via which universities can achieve many goals, from obtaining finance to detecting training and research needs, conducting cultural activities, etc.

In the future, AAEDAT aims to keep its objectives, purpose and commitment to developing scientific knowledge on the environment and applying it for the benefit of its members, the wider university community, and society in general. It intends to continue organising regular and varied activities that are also open to any member of the general public who may be interested in contemporary socio-environmental topics. One of the challenges AAEDAT faces is how to maintain and strengthen its communications and connections with current and former students of the URV's Master's in Environmental Law since all its subjects (apart from the internships) are taught online. This implies that AAEDAT, like the Master's itself,

must employ information and communication technologies to reach and maintain contact with current students from other countries who are taking the online courses. Strengthening the institutional link with these students is a very important task that must be supported by AAEDAT.

AAEDAT therefore intends not only to continue its collaboration with the entities with which it regularly conducts activities but also to establish relations with other university research centres that work on socio-environmental affairs from the same perspective. Our aim is to pool the lines of interest of our Master's students, our former Master's students and our members that are in common with those of other entities whose objectives are similar to ours. This would enable our online presence to be a combination of forces that contributes to the visibility and positioning of the URV in the international arena, thus helping the university become a benchmark in teaching and research in the field of Environmental Law



Source: AAEDAT

Testimonial

Over the years, AAEDAT has become a dynamic association characterised by the wide cultural diversity of its members, many of who come from Latin American countries. The activities carried out since 2009 have enabled AAEDAT members to share their experiences and knowledge from an international and multidisciplinary perspective. No doubt, this represents one of the Association's great potentials, since it encourages the creation of links based on the common interests and affinities of the members who are taking or have taken the URV's Master's in Environmental Law.

Since its foundation, the Association has continued to expand and strengthen. It has also undergone several changes that have enabled it to adapt to the changing needs and interests of its members and the socio-environmental context.

The activities of the Association have promoted the transfer and dissemination of knowledge on environmental law. They have also raised awareness among both students of other disciplines and wider society on numerous socio-environmental problems, including waste generation, climate change, the impact of multinational companies, public involvement, right to the city, etc.), while fostering respect for the environment.

DANIEL IGLESIAS MÁRQUEZ

President of AAEDAT Board of Directors (2015-2016)

