

Preface

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In the spring semester of 2013 six students of Maastricht University participated in a course on Neuroscience and Law. This course was taught as a so-called MARBLE-project. Maastricht Research Based Learning-projects are part of the Dutch government's SIRIUS Program that aims to promote excellence in Dutch higher education, building upon the self-evident idea that talented students need to be challenged and encouraged to do their very best. At Maastricht University, MARBLE-projects funded through SIRIUS are open for third year bachelor students who want to engage in a research project and who belong to the top 20% of their class. The course on Neuroscience and Law attracted students from both the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences who worked intensively together during four months. The course started in February 2013 and ended on 30 May 2013 with a conference organised by the students.

Neuroscience and law (in brief 'Neurolaw') is one of the most exciting recent developments at the intersection of law and science. It is a rapidly emerging field that reveals all kinds of details about how the human brain works. The aim of the course was to explore how this new scientific knowledge can or should affect the law. This influence is potentially important. The main reason for this is that law is full of presumptions about how and why people act. These presumptions are increasingly questioned by neuroscientists, giving rise to what some have called a 'neuro-revolution' in our thinking about law. However, it is far from clear what the *exact* impact of neuro-scientific insights has to be. The main aim of the course was to explore this impact. This led us to explore a wide range of different issues:

- a. a mapping exercise of the potential impact of neuroscience on law. This mapping exercise was the main activity during the first seven weeks of the project.
- b. an exploration of a number of more specific topics. Students selected these topics during the first seven weeks and then wrote an individual paper during the second part of the project.

The activities that we undertook during the course are set out in the Introduction to this volume. The main part of this volume consists of the six papers that the students wrote. These papers deserve a broad audience. They are of high quality and testify of the enthusiasm and skills of their authors. All in all, the volume is evidence of the excellent research and editing skills of the six participating students.