

Krombach: The Final Curtain

Readers of this blog may be interested to learn that the well-known (and, in many ways, quite depressing) *Krombach/Bamberski* saga appears to have finally found its conclusion with a decision by the European Court of Human Rights (*Krombach v France*, App no 67521/14) that was given yesterday.

Krombach - who, after having been convicted for killing his stepdaughter, had successfully resisted the enforcement of the French civil judgment in Germany (Case C-7/98 *Krombach*) and, equally successfully, appealed the criminal sentence (*Krombach v France*, App no 29731/96), before he had famously been kidnapped, brought to France, and convicted a second time - had brought a new complaint with regard to this second judgment. He had argued that his conviction in France violated the principle of *ne bis in idem* (as guaranteed in Art 4 of Protocol No 7) since he had previously been acquitted in Germany with regard to the same event.

Yesterday, the Court declared this application inadmissible as Art 4 of Protocol No 7, according to both its wording and the Court's previous case law, 'only concerned "courts in the same State"' (see the English Press Release).

[35.] ... [L]a Cour constate que cette thèse [du requérant] se heurte aux termes mêmes de l'article 4 du Protocole no 7, qui renvoient expressément au « même État » partie à la Convention plutôt qu'à tout État partie à la Convention. ...

[36.] La Cour a ainsi jugé avec constance que l'article 4 du Protocole no 7 ne visait que les « juridictions du même État » et ne faisait donc pas obstacle à ce qu'une personne soit poursuivie ou punie pénalement par les juridictions d'un État partie à la Convention en raison d'une infraction pour laquelle elle avait été acquittée ou condamnée par un jugement définitif dans un autre État partie ...

It also pointed out that 'the fact that France and Germany were members of the European Union did not affect the applicability of Article 4 of Protocol No. 7' (ibid).

[38.] La Cour estime par ailleurs que la circonstance que la France et

l'Allemagne sont membres de l'Union Européenne et que le droit de l'Union européenne donne au principe ne bis in idem une dimension trans-étatique à l'échelle de l'Union européenne ... est sans incidence sur la question de l'applicabilité de l'article 4 du Protocole no 7 en l'espèce.

The Strasbourg Court thus appears to have added the final chapter to a case that has occupied the courts in Germany, France, and Luxembourg for almost 35 years, raising some pertinent questions as to mutual trust and judicial corporation in the process.