

Corona and Private International Law: A Regularly Updated Repository of Writings, Cases and Developments



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Updated: June 17, 2020

The coronavirus has created a global crisis that affects all aspects of life everywhere. Not surprisingly, that means that the law is affected as well. And indeed, we have seen a high volume of legislation and legal regulations, of court decisions, and of scholarly debates. In some US schools there are courses on the legal aspects of corona. Some disciplines are organizing symposia or special journal issues to discuss the impact of the pandemic on the respective discipline.

Private international law has not (yet?) consolidated discussions of the relevance of the crisis for the field, and of the field for the crisis (though the new [EAPIL blog](#) is running a very valuable series). But of course, private international law matters are crucial to countless issues related to the epidemic – from production chains through IP over possible vaccines to mundane questions like the territorial application of lockdown regulations.

Knowledge of these issues is important. It is important for private international lawyers to realize the importance of our discipline. But it is perhaps even more important for decision makers to be aware of both the pitfalls and the potentials of conflicts of law.

This site, which we hope to update continually, is meant to be a place to collect, as comprehensively as possible, sources on the interaction of the new coronavirus and the discipline. The aim is not to provide general introductions into private international law, or to lay out sources that could be

relevant. Nor is this meant to be an independent scholarly paper. What we try to provide is a one-stop place at which to find private international law discussions worldwide regarding to coronavirus.

For this purpose, we limit ourselves to the discipline as traditionally understood—jurisdiction, choice of law, recognition and enforcement, international procedure. Coronavirus has other impacts on transnational private law and those deserve attention too, but we want to keep this one manageable.

Please help make this a good informative site. Please share any reference that you have – from any jurisdiction, in any legislation – and we will, if possible, share them on this site. Please contact olbing@mpipriv.de

General

The early reactions to the COVID-19 outbreak were of general character and discussed the virus's implication on conflict of laws broadly.

[Matthias Lehmann](#) discusses the role of private international law on a number of issues – the impact of travel restrictions on transportation contracts, contract law issues for canceled events, canceled or delayed deliveries, but also liability for infections.

Online, Mirèze Philippe will talk about the “The ICC Guidance Note on Possible Measures Aimed at Mitigating the Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic” on June 22, 2020. To register email info@arbitrateatlanta.org.

Another webinar will be held on “Vulnerability in the Trade and Investment Regimes in the Age of #COVID19 on the same day. Register [here](#).

A Mexican conference about Covid-19 and its impacts on private international Law will be on June 25, 2020 on [Zoom](#).

There was an [online-workshop on "COVID-19 und IPR/IZVR"](#) by Matthias Lehmann on Tuesday June 2, 2020 at 11:00 a.m. (zoom video-call).

As a follow-up of a webinar on PIL & COVID-19, Inez Lopez and Fabrício Polido give "[some initial thoughts and lessons to face in daily life](#)"

The university of Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government collects all measures by governments around the world in the "[Coronavirus Government Response Tracker](#)".

A group of Brazilian scholars organized an [online symposium](#) on Private International Law & Covid-19. Mobility of People, Commerce and Challenges to the Global Order. The videos are [here](#) (Note: the last session is still forthcoming on May 22).

The Organization of American States holds a weekly virtual forum on "[Inter-American law in times of pandemic](#)" (every Monday, 11:00 a.m., UTC-5h). One topic of many will be on "New Challenges for Private International Law" (Monday, June 15, 2020).

The Secretary General of the Hague Conference provided an [online message](#) from his home. Ensuing, the Permanent Bureau developed a [Toolkit](#) for resources and publications relevant to the current global situation.

State Liability

Some thoughts are given to compensation suits brought against China for its alleged responsibility in the spread of the virus. One main issue here is whether China can claim sovereign immunity.

In the United States, several suits have been brought in [Florida](#) (March 12), [Nevada](#) (March 23) and [Missouri](#) (April 21) against China, which plaintiffs deem responsible for the uncontrolled spread of the virus, which later caused massive financial damage and human loss in the United States. Not surprisingly officials and scholars in China were extremely critical (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

But legal scholars, including [Chimène Keitner](#) and [Stephen L. Carter](#), also think such suits are bound to fail due to China's sovereign immunity, as do [Sophia Tang and Zhengxin Huo](#). [Hiroyuki Banzai](#) doubts that the actions can succeed since it will be difficult to prove a causal link between the damages and the (in-) actions by the Chinese Government. [Lea Brilmayer](#) suspects that such a claim will fail since it would be unlikely, that a court will assume jurisdiction. [Tom Ginsburg](#) lays out the legal issues in an interview in German. Fabrizio Marrella discusses the [Italian](#) perspective.

A Republican Representative is [introducing](#) two House Resolutions urging the US Congress to waive China's sovereign immunity in this regard; such a waiver has also been proposed by a [Washington Post author](#). The claim has also found support by [Fox News](#).

Interestingly, there is also a [reverse suit](#) by state-backed Chinese lawyers against the United States for covering up the pandemic. Guodong Du [expects](#) this will likewise be barred by sovereign immunity.

In the UK, the conservative Henry Jackson Society published a [report](#) suggesting that China is liable for violating its obligations under the International Health Regulations. The report discusses ten (!) legal avenues towards this goal, most of them in public international law, but also including suits in Chinese, UK and US courts (pp 28-30). Sovereign immunity is discussed as a severe but not impenetrable barrier.

Contract Law

Both the pandemic itself and the ensuing national regulations impede the fulfilment of contracts. Legal issues ensue. An overview of European international contract law and the implications of COVID-19 is given [here](#) and [here](#).

If a contracting party is unable to perform its contractual obligations, incapacity to perform can be based on force majeure or hardship. Most contributions suggest to apply for force majeure certificates which are offered by most countries, for example by [China](#), [Russia](#). How such a certificate can influence contractual obligations under English and New York Law is shown by [Yeseung Jang](#). The German perspective is given by [Philip Reusch and Laura Kleiner](#), further the [South Korean](#) and the [Common Law](#) perspective on force majeure have been published. The difficulty to implement appropriate [force majeure clauses](#) in a contract is shown by Matteo Winkler.

The CISG has long been of very little importance in international contract law but now is subject to many discussions. André Janssen and Johannes Wahnschaffe dedicate a [detailed analysis](#) to exemptions from liability and cases of hardship under the CISG.

Victoria Lee, Mark Lehberg, Vinny Sanchez and James Vickery go beyond force majeure implications on contracts in their [expert analysis](#). William Shaughnessy [presents](#) issues which might occur in international construction contracts.

Another crucial aspect is the application of overriding mandatory rules on international contracts. Ennio Piovesani [discusses](#) whether Italian decree-laws enacted in view of the pandemic can operate as overriding mandatory rules and whether that would be compatible with EU law. So does [Giovanni Zarra](#) on international mandatory rules. Apostolos Anthimos adds [the](#)

[Greek perspective](#), Claire Debourg the [French](#) to the discussion. Matthias Lehmann [considers](#) more broadly possible private international law issues and responses under European law. José Antonio Briceño Laborí and Maritza Méndez Zambrano add the [Venezuelan](#) view.

The crisis hits in particular global value and production chains. Impacts are discussed by [Tomaso Ferando](#), by [Markus Uitz and Hemma Parsché](#) and by [Anna Beckers](#), though neither focuses specifically on private international law.

[Caterina Benini](#) explains a new Italian mandatory rule providing a minimum standard of protection for employees.

Klaus Peter Berger and Daniel Behn in their historical and comparative [study](#) on force majeure and hardship, highlight that such remedies are quite regular to find and fit to distribute the risk emanating from such a crisis evenly.

Tort

Next to state liability, a lively but less political discussion on civil liability in international tort law has evolved.

Florian Heindler [discusses](#) how legal measures to battle the virus could be applicable to a relevant tort case (either as local data or by special connection).

An extensive [overview](#) about damages and Corona under Indian international tort law is given by Saloni Khanderia.

General implications of the coronavirus on [product liability](#) and a possible duty to warn costumers, without specific reverence to conflict of laws.

In Austria, a consumer protection association is [considering](#) mass litigation against the Federal State of Tyrolia and local

tourist businesses based on their inaction in view of the spreading virus in tourist places like Ischgl. A [questionnaire](#) is opened for European citizens. Matthias Weller [reports](#). [Jos Hoevenars and Xandra Kramer](#) discuss the potential of similar actions in the Netherlands under the 2005 Collective Settlement Act, WCAM.

Family Law

Implications also exist in family law, for example regarding the Hague Abduction Convention.

In an Ontario case ([Onuoha v Onuoha 2020 ONSC 1815](#)), concerning children taken from Nigeria to Ontario, the father sought to have the matter dealt with on an urgent basis, although regular court operations were suspended due to Covid-19. The court declined, suggesting this was “not the time” to hear such a motion, and in any way international travel was not in the best interest of the child. For the discussion see [here](#).

Aspects of travel restrictions in international abduction cases are analysed by [Gemme Pérez](#).

A general overview of abduction in times of corona was [published](#) by Nadia Rusinova. Another contribution by her covers recent case law and legislation on remote [child related proceedings](#) which were conducted during the last weeks around the world. She also highlights, that COVID-19 measures can impact [Article 8 ECHR](#).

A recent [webinar](#) also discussed the impact on the Hague Abductions Convention.

Also cases of international surrogacy come into mind which are affected by COVID-19, as [Mariana Iglesias](#) shows.

Personal Data

The protection of personal data in transnational environments has always been a controversial topic in conflict of laws. [Jie Huang](#) shows, that due to COVID-19 existing tensions between the EU, the USA and China are reflected in their conflict of laws approach.

Economic Law

The crisis puts stress on global trade and therefore also economic law. Sophie Hunter [discusses](#) developments in the competition laws of various countries (though with no explicit focus on conflict of laws issues).

Intellectual Property

Due to lockdowns and school closures, online work and teaching has exorbitantly increased but, as Marketa Trimble stresses, with little notion of transnational [copyright](#) issues.

Public Certification

In times of lockdown and closed borders notarization and public certification become almost impossible. Therefore, various countries have adjusted their legislation. You will find an overview [here](#).

Dispute Resolution

Regulations against social contact and lockdowns make physical presence in court rooms impossible and thereby put pressure on courts. Some courts suspend their activities except for urgent

matters (one international abduction case in which this becomes prevalent is discussed in the family law section.) Developments in Italy are discussed [here](#), developments in English law [here](#).

Another possibility is the move to greater digitalization, as [discussed](#) comparatively by Emma van Gelder, Xandra Kramer and Erlis Themeli. The Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH) published a [Guide to Good Practice on the Use of Video-Link under the 1970 Evidence Convention](#), discussed also with reference to Corona by [Mayela Celis](#).

[Maxi Scherer](#) takes the crisis as an opportunity to analyse virtual hearings in international arbitration. Complications and long-term effects of virtual arbitration are presented [here](#).

A very broad presentation of legislation in France, Italy and Germany in [civil procedure](#), including cross border service and taking of evidence as well as its implications on international child abduction and protection, is given by Giovanni Chiapponi.

A US project guided by Richard Suskind [collects](#) cases of so-called “remote courts” worldwide.

The EU gives information about the [“impact of the COVID-19 virus on the justice field”](#) concerning various means of dispute resolution.

Gilberto A. Guerrero-Rocca analyses the impacts of COVID-19 on [international arbitration in relation to the CISG](#).

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