

In Memoriam - Alegría Borrás Rodríguez (1943-2020)

written by Cristina González Beilfuss and Marta Pertegás Sender



It is with deep sadness that we write these lines to honour the memory of our dear mentor Alegría Borrás. Alegría unexpectedly passed away at the end of last year and, although she had been battling cancer for a while, she continued working as always. For Alegría was a hardworking fighter who sought and found her notorious place in life with determination, courage and borderless efforts. We believe we speak here for so many of Alegría's alumni who miss her deeply and are determined to pay tribute to her memory with our work and memories.

We both had the great privilege of Alegría's support for years and decades, from the moment she taught us at the "barracones" of the Law Faculty of the University of Barcelona until the very last day of Alegría's life. Her death surprised us all on one of those typical "Alegría's days" of frantic activity and unconditional support to the projects and institutions she believed in.

With this homage, we by no means pretend to recap all her merits and achievements. We are thankful that, while still alive, Alegría received many distinctions and exceptional prizes for all she meant to the (international legal) community.

All those who once met Alegría may inevitably think of her characteristic high voice and strong presence while remembering her. To us, it is her unique insight, tireless professionalism and devoted expertise that made Alegría the exceptional mentor she was.

In every assignment Alegría carried out - regardless the size of the task or its

specific context -, Alegría showed profound dedication and daily perseverance. Behind a *joie de vivre* - how can one by the name of Alegría otherwise come across? - there was an exemplary academic rigor and uncountable hours of day and night work.

Alegría will always be remembered as someone who transformed our discipline in recent years. She did so, from her Chair in Barcelona, where many of us first discovered private international law thanks to her teaching. Her classes were enriched by the many anecdotes of places (Brussels, The Hague...) and instances (the GEDIP, l'Institut, the Academy, ...) that, back then, sounded like remote laboratories of private international law. Little did we know that we would marvel around the privilege of sharing missions and tasks with Alegría in such venues in the years to follow.

We have indeed witnessed how Alegría contributed, to the approximation of Spain to such poles of uniform private international law. For decades, Alegría wisely brought Spain to any negotiation table on private international law, and she proudly brought the results of such international work back home. We think it is fair to say that, without Alegría, international and European private international law might not have the right channels to permeate into the Spanish legal system. This is not a sporadic success; it requires titanic efforts and perseverance for decades. Actually, for Alegría, her international work was much more than the daily sessions at the Peace Palace or at the Council, the overnight work in committees and working groups or the taxi rides from and to the airport in rainy and grey weather. There was so much more... She made time for beautifully written and detailed reports to the relevant Ministries, for influential contacts with diplomatic posts and, not to forget, for raising awareness among the academic community. Her regular contributions to the *Revista Jurídica de Catalunya*, to the *Revista Española de derecho internacional* or to the *Anuario español de Derecho internacional* privado guided Spanish lawyers eager to keep track on "what was going on in Brussels or The Hague". Alegría knew how the machinery of international relations works and used these insights brilliantly to connect Spain to the international legal community, and vice versa.

The readers of Conflictsoflaws.net may associate the name of Alegría Borrás with significant milestones in the development of private international law over the past decades: Alegría was a key delegate of the Hague's Children Conventions, the Co-Rapporteur of the Child Support Convention, the Rapporteur of the

Brussels II Convention, the author of influential work on conflicts of instruments (perhaps we should refer to the “Borrás clause” as shortcut for the “clauses de déconnection”). We are also aware that there is so much more, because, no matter how important her international projects were, Alegría remained truly anchored at home, in her city and her University as a member of the *Acadèmia de Legislació i Jurisprudència de Catalunya* for example, where she joined efforts with her very good friend Encarna Roca Trias.

Home, for Alegría, was Barcelona, no matter how often her international work took her away from them. Her family was her greatest pride and her unconditional top priority. A loving wife, mother and grandmother and an example to so many of us who juggle balls in all these roles...

And the University of Barcelona was not only her academic home but also our meeting point. The private international community has lost a great scholar and a formidable person. Alegría, we thoroughly miss you and thank you so much for all you did for us and so many other alumni of yours. Together, we will persevere in our efforts the way you taught us. Rest in peace.