EU Regulation on Succession and Wills Published in the Official Journal

The EU regulation on succession (see our most recent post here) has been published in the Official Journal of the European Union n. L 201 of 27 July 2012. The official reference is the following: **Regulation (EU) No 650/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2012 on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition and enforcement of decisions and acceptance and enforcement of authentic instruments in matters of succession and on the creation of a European Certificate of Succession** (OJ n. L 201, p. 107 ff.).

Pursuant to its Art. 84(2), **the regulation shall apply from 17 August 2015, to the succession of persons who die on or after the same date** (see Art. 83(1)). Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom did not take part in the adoption of the instrument and are not bound by it.

Our friend *Federico Garau*, over at Conflictus Legum, provides an excellent summary of the main principles underlying this new piece of EU PIL legislation. A rich list of references on the regulation and its legislative history is pointed out by *Pietro Franzina*, at the Aldricus blog.

Regulation on the Mutual Recognition of Protection Measures in Civil Matters

In June 2011 the European Council adopted a Resolution entitled “Roadmap for strengthening the rights and protection of victims, in particular in criminal

proceedings", immediately published (OJ *C* 187, June 2011, 28th). I might of course be mistaken, but it seems to me that both the Resolution and its immediate consequences in the civil realm have gone largely unnoticed . Let's fill (if only a bit) the gap.

The document starts reminding that in the Stockholm programme "An open and secure Europe serving the citizen", the European Council had stressed the importance to provide special support and legal protection to those who are most vulnerable, such as persons subjected to repeated violence in close relationships, victims of gender-based violence, or persons who fall victim to other types of crimes in a Member State of which they are not nationals or residents. In the same vein, responding to the Stockholm programme, the European Commission has proposed a package of measures on victims of crime including a Regulation on the mutual recognition of protection measures in civil matters [Com(2011) 276 *final*, May 2011, 18]. The Regulation intends to help preventing harm and violence and ensure that victims who benefit from a protection measure taken in one Member State are provided with the same level of protection in other Member States, should they move or travel there; and that protection be awarded without the victim having to go through additional procedures. In order to ensure a quick, cheap and efficient mechanism of circulation of protection measures in the European Union, the *rationale* of Council Regulation (EC) No 2201/2003 of 27 November 2003 concerning jurisdiction and the recognition and enforcement of judgments in matrimonial matters and the matters of parental responsibility, repealing Regulation (EC) No 1347/2000 ('Brussels II-bis'), and in particular Articles 41 and 42 (therefore automatic recognition and the abolition on intermediate procedures such as exequatur) thereof, has been followed.

The fact that the proposal follows the *rationale* of existing EU instruments on judicial cooperation in civil and commercial matters implies that many provisions are similar or equal to the correspondent articles in the mentioned legislation. This is not a problem in itself; it might be, nevertheless, as certain protection measures are already covered by the Brussels I and Brussels II-bis Regulations. It is therefore important to clarify the articulation of the proposal with these regulations. According to the Commission, as the new Regulation establishes special rules in relation to protection measures, following a general principal of law it shall supersede the general rules set out by Brussels I. As for the Regulation Brussels II-bis, the aim of which is to centralise all proceedings

relating to a given divorce or legal separation the situation is different: the proposal must not jeopardise rules governing jurisdiction and the recognition of judgments contained in the Brussels II-bis Regulation by offering the possibility to seize the jurisdiction of another Member State as regards the protection measures taken in the context of the ongoing proceedings. For this reasons, all protection measures entering into the scope of Brussels II-bis shall continue to be governed by this instrument. Examples of measures that do not fall under the application of Brussels II-bis are protection measures which would concern a couple which has not been married, same sex partners or neighbours.

The proposal provides for a speedy and efficient mechanism to ensure that the Member State to which the person at risk moves will recognise the protection measure issued by the Member State of origin without any intermediate formalities. A standardised certificate issued by the competent authority of this Member State, either ex-officio or on request of the protected person, will contain all information relevant for the recognition. The beneficiary of the measure will contact the competent authorities in the second Member State and provide them with the certificate. The competent authorities of the second Member State will notify the person causing the risk about the geographical extension of the foreign protection measure, the sanctions applicable in case of its violation and, where applicable, ensure its enforcement.

ERA Conference on Cross-Border Successions

On 22 and 23 November 2012 the Academy of European Law (ERA) will host a bilingual (English/German) conference in Trier on the new regulation on cross-border successions. The conference is set up for practitioners (lawyers, notaries, ministry officials) and academics. Key topics are:

- Scope of the instrument
- Jurisdiction and applicable law

- Recognition and enforcement of decisions
- Authentic documents in matters of succession
- Creation of a European Certificate of Succession

The official inivitation reads as follows:

> *On 7 June 2012, the Regulation aimed at simplifying the settlement of international successions was adopted by the EU's Justice Council. This new Regulation will ease the legal burden when a family member with property in another EU country passes away.*
>
> *Under the Regulation, there will be a single criterion for determining both the jurisdiction and the law applicable to a cross-border succession: the deceased's habitual place of residence. People living abroad will, however, be able to opt for the law of their country of nationality to apply to the entirety of their succession. The Regulation will also permit citizens to plan their succession in advance in more legal certainty. This new instrument paves the way for the European Certificate of Succession which will allow people to prove that they are heirs or administrators without further formalities throughout the EU.*
>
> *The conference will provide an in-depth discussion of the most topical issues regarding successions and wills in a European context.*

More information is available at the ERA's website.

JHA Council (7-8 June 2012): EU Regulation on Successions and Wills Adopted – General Approach

on Brussels I Recast – CESL

The Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council of the EU, currently holding its meeting in Luxembourg (7-8 June), **adopted today the successions regulation** (Regulation on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition and enforcement of decisions, acceptance and enforcement of authentic instruments in matters of succession and on the creation of a European certificate of succession): see the Council's note and RAPID press release. The final text can be found in doc. no. PE-CONS 14/12.

Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom do not participate in the regulation, pursuant to the special position they hold in respect of the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice, **while Malta voted against the adoption**, expressing concerns on the uncertainty that the new rules will create in the legal regime of international successions, vis-à-vis current Maltese law (see the Maltese statement in the Addendum to Council's doc. no. 10569/1/12).

As pointed out in a previous post, an agreement had been reached by the Council and the Parliament in order to adopt the new instrument at first reading: a history of the legislative procedure, along with the key documents, is available on the OEIL and Prelex websites. Once the regulation is published in the OJ, the whole set of Council's documents relating to the procedure, currently not available, will be disclosed. An interesting reading on the legislative history can also be found on the IPEX website, which gathers the opinions of national parliaments of the Member States on draft EU legislation.

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Two other PIL items are set on the agenda of the JHA meeting on Friday 8 June. **The Council is expected to approve a general approach on the Brussels I recast** (see the state of play in Council's doc. no 10609/12 and the draft text set out in doc. no 10609/12 ADD 1), **and to hold a debate on the orientation and the method** to handle the further negotiations on the proposal for regulation **on a Common European Sales Law** (CESL). As regards the latter, here's an excerpt from the background note of the meeting:

> *The first discussions on the [CESL] proposal have made it clear that this file entails divergences among member states. Several member states had*

therefore requested that a political debate at the level of the Council takes place before proceeding further with technical discussions.

To this end, the Presidency submits a discussion paper to the Council (10611/12) proposing that ministers address questions related to the legal basis and the need for the proposal, its scope (focus on sales contracts concluded on-line) and whether to start work on model contract terms and conditions.

Latest Issue of "Praxis des Internationalen Privat- und Verfahrensrechts" (3/2012)

Recently, the May/June issue of the German law journal "Praxis des Internationalen Privat- und Verfahrensrechts" (**IPRax)** was published.

- ***Burkhard Hess***: "Staatenimmunität und ius cogens im geltenden Völkerrecht: Der Internationale Gerichtshof zeigt die Grenzen auf" – the English abstract reads as follows:

This article deals with the decision of the International Court of Justice in Jurisdictional Immunities of the State (Germany v. Italy: Greece intervening), critically analysing the question of juridictional immunities of the the state in current public international law.

- ***Björn Laukemann***: "Der ordre public im europäischen Insolvenzverfahren" – the English abstract reads as follows:

The advancing integration of European civil procedure means that the criteria under which European insolvency judgments can be refused recognition on grounds of public policy are constantly modified. The European Insolvency

Regulation is not excluded from such a development. Public policy is not something which is solely derived from national law. More and more, a European concept of public policy is becoming the benchmark for interpreting Art. 26. This article will focus on the analysis of the public policy clause in the light of international insolvency law principles – mainly the universal and immediate recognition of insolvency proceedings. Against this background, it will show why and to what extent the interpretation of Art. 26 of the Insolvency Regulation differs from that of Art. 34 n° 1 of the Brussels I Regulation, which is applied in the context of civil procedure. Due to the increasing harmonisation within the EU, the article will also shed light on the relation between the public policy exception and the need for a prior legal defence in the State in which the insolvency proceedings were opened.

- ***David-Christoph Bittmann***: "Der Begriff der „Zivil- und Handelssache" im internationalen Rechtshilfeverkehr" – the English abstract reads as follows:

The OLG Frankfurt/Main had to decide on a case concerning the qualification of the term of "civil and commercial matters" in the German-British Convention on the conduct of legal proceedings of 20 March 1928. On the basis of this convention the High Court Auckland (New Zealand) requested the service of a petition by way of legal aid from the Amtsgericht Frankfurt/Main. Subject of this petition was a penalty, requested from the New Zealand Commerce Commission against the applicant. The Commission accused the applicant of having infringed the Commerce Act of 1986. The applicant opposed against the service of the petition that the Convention from 1928 is not applicable on the requested penalty. The OLG Frankfurt/Main followed this argumentation and denied a civil and commercial matter. The following article analyses the problem of the qualification of "civil and commercial matters" in international civil procedure law at the example of the penalties requested by the New Zealand Commerce Commission.

- ***Oliver L. Knöfel***: "Ordnungsgeld wegen Ausbleibens im Ausland? – Aktuelle Probleme des deutsch-israelischen Rechtshilfeverkehrs" – the English abstract reads as follows:

The article reviews a decision of the Higher Social Court of North Rhine-

Westphalia (3.12.2008 – L 8 R 239/07), dealing with the question whether a contempt fine (Ordnungsgeld) can be imposed on a party to a lawsuit who has been summoned to appear before a German consul posted abroad or before a German judge acting on foreign soil, but who has failed to comply with the summons. The author analyses the relevant mechanisms of the Hague Evidence Convention of 1970 as well as German procedural law.

- ***Dirk Otto***: "Präklusion und Verwirkung von Vollstreckungsversagungsgründen bei der Vollstreckung ausländischer Schiedsgerichtsentscheidungen" – the English abstract reads as follows:

The German Federal Supreme Court refused to enforce a foreign arbitration award for lack of a valid arbitration agreement and held that a defendant, who objected against the arbitration throughout the proceedings is not estopped from invoking Art. V (1) (a) of the New York Convention (NYC) for having failed to initiate set-aside proceedings under the lex arbitri. The Supreme Court stressed that a defendant may opt not to commence court proceedings at the place where the award was rendered but may choose to resist enforcement under Article V NYC. This interpretation is in line with case law in other Convention countries. However, a defendant may be estopped from invoking grounds for non-enforcement if he participates in arbitration proceedings but fails to protest against any deficiencies. Furthermore, if a defendant does opt to seek annulment of an award at the place of origin, he has to put forward all reasons for setting aside, otherwise he may be precluded from raising them before the enforcing court.

- ***Frauke Wedemann***: "Die Regelungen des deutschen Eigenkapitalersatzrechts: Insolvenz- oder Gesellschaftsrecht?" – the English abstract reads as follows:

Under German law, shareholder loans are subordinate to the claims of all other creditors in the case of the insolvency of a company whose members are not personally liable. In its "PIN Group" decision, the German Federal Supreme Court (BGH) held that this rule also applies to companies founded in another EU Member State for which insolvency proceedings have been opened in Germany. The Court stated that the rule is to be characterised as a matter of insolvency law – not company law – and based this ruling on Art. 4(2)(g) and (i)

of the European Regulation on Insolvency Proceedings. The author agrees with the decision, but critically examines and refines its reasoning. She analyses in detail whether the application of the German rule to a foreign company is compatible with the freedom of establishment (Art. 49, 54 TFEU). Furthermore she discusses the characterisation of other German rules concerning (1) the rescission of repayments of shareholder loans after the opening of insolvency proceedings or after the refusal to open such proceedings for lack of funds, (2) loans for which a shareholder has provided a security, and (3) the relinquishment of items or rights for use or exercise by a shareholder to the company. She argues that all these rules are to be characterised as matters of insolvency law.

- ***Heinrich Dörner***: "Der Zugriff des Staates auf erbenlose Nachlässe – Fiskuserbrecht oder hoheitliche Aneignung?" – the English abstract reads as follows:

The state's right to succeed to heirless estates may be construed either as a succession under private law or as an act of occupation under public law. In the present judgement the "Kammergericht" deals with the legal nature of the state's right of succession under the Civil Code of the former Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and correctly characterises it as private intestate succession. According to the former Russian law of succession a cousin of the decedent was not entitled to a statutory portion. This regulation does not constitute an infringement of the German public order.

- ***Dirk Looschelders***: "Der Anspruch auf Rückzahlung des Brautgelds nach yezidischem Brauchtum" – the English abstract reads as follows:

In the discussed case the groom's family agreed to pay nuptial money to the father of the bride in compliance with the requirements for marriage in the Yazidi tradition. According to this tradition and the parties' agreement this money had to be repaid, because the marriage was dissolved after the wife had suffered under severe abuse by her husband.

The agreement on nuptial money has not to be qualified contractually but as a question of engagement. The determination of the statute of engagement is

controversial, in the present case, however, German law is decisive according to all opinions. Pursuant to § 138 BGB the agreement on nuptial money is void as it violates public policy. A claim for repayment on grounds of unjustified enrichment fails due to § 817 sent. 2 BGB, because the violation of public policy is not only caused by the money receiving party but also the paying claimant.

- ***Martin Illmer***: "West Tankers reloaded – Vollstreckung eines feststellenden Schiedsspruchs zur Abwehr der Vollstreckung einer zukünftigen ausländischen Gerichtsentscheidung" – the English abstract reads as follows:

After the European Court of Justice's decision in West Tankers and the Court of Appeal's conclusions in National Navigation, anti-suit injunctions as well as declaratory decisions by the state courts at the seat of the arbitration regarding the existence and validity of the arbitration agreement are either not available or not effective in preventing torpedo actions frustrating the arbitration agreement. In light of this unsatisfactory status quo, after having succeeded in the arbitration proceedings in London (declaring West Tankers' non-liability for the damage under dispute), West Tankers sought to enforce the arbitral award in England so as to prevent recognition and enforcement of a future Italian judgment on the merits. Whether an arbitral award constitutes a ground for refusing a declaration of enforceability of a foreign decision under Art. 34, 45 Brussels I Regulation is, however, disputed. The High Court as well as the Court of Appeal held that the issue was not decisive for the outcome of the case while it clearly was. This is at last proven by the fact that the High Court implicitly determined the issue by upholding the declaration of enforceability of the arbitral award. This article scrutinises the High Court's decision and the Court of Appeal's dismissal of the appeal in light of the interface of the Brussels I Regulation and arbitration. Furthermore, it discusses the crucial question whether an arbitral award may constitute a ground for refusing a declaration of enforceability under the Brussels I Regulation and whether such a ground would be compatible with the ECJ's decision in West Tankers.

- ***Weidi LONG***: "The First Choice-of-Law Act of China's Mainland: An Overview" – the abstract reads as follows:

On 28 October 2010, China promulgated the Act of the People's Republic of

China on Application of Law in Civil Relations with Foreign Contacts, which came into force in China's Mainland on 1 April 2011. The Act is remarkable for its brevity and lack of concrete solutions. The legislators have opted for generality, while leaving specific issues to the courts and in particular, to the Supreme People's Court. Thus, the legislature has merely set the stage for the judiciary by providing a preliminary framework for future Chinese private international law. Pending interpretive instruments by the Supreme People's Court, this Note stays with an overview of the Act. It first introduces the legal background to Chinese private international law, followed by a brief retrospect of the legislative history of the Act. It then discusses the general features of the Act, viz., the residual role of the closest connection rule, the liberal attitude towards party autonomy, the free-spirited approach to forum mandatory rules, enhanced (possibilities of) content-orientation, and adoption of the habitual-residence principle. Finally, it concludes by observing that Chinese private international law is moving towards a regime with greater flexibility, and that this move is inspired by the demands for substantial justice and the wish to promote national interests.

- **Duygu Damar**:"Deutsch-türkisches Nachlassabkommen: zivilprozess- und kollisionsrechtliche Aspekte" – the English abstract reads as follows:

The German-Turkish Agreement on Succession of 1929 is of substantial importance for more than one and a half million Turkish nationals with habitual residence in Germany. The Agreement on Succession does not only regulate the applicable law regarding movable and immovable estate as well as the international competence of German and Turkish courts, but also grants important powers, in line with given tasks, to German and Turkish consuls. These powers generally cause doubts in German practice, whether the certificate of inheritance should be issued by the Turkish consul in case of death of a Turkish national in Germany. The
article gives an overview on the conflict of laws rules set in the Agreement on Succession and clarifies the questions of civil procedure with regard to the issuance of certificates of inheritance and their consideration in Turkish law of civil procedure.

- ***Erik Jayme/Carl Friedrich Nordmeier*** on the conference of the

German-Lusitanian Association in Cologne: “Anwendung und Rezeption lusophoner Rechte: Tagung der Deutsch-Lusitanischen Juristenvereinigung in Köln”

- ***Erik Jayme*** on art trade and PIL: “Kunsthandel und Internationales Privatrecht – Zugleich Rezension zu Michael Anton, Rechtshandbuch – Kulturgüterschutz und Kunstrestitutionsrecht”
- ***Marc-Philippe Weller*** on the PIL Session 2011 of the Hague Academy of International Law: “Les conflits de lois n’existent pas! Hague Academy of International Law – Ein Bericht über die IPR-Session 2011”

Kein Abstract

French Supreme Court Rules on European Enforcement Order

On January 6th, 2012, the French Supreme Court for Private and Commercial Matters (*Cour de cassation*) ruled for the first time on the European Enforcement Order established by Regulation 804/2005.

The issue before the court was whether a European Enforcement Order (EEO) certificate could stand and justify enforcement measures after the certified decision had been set aside in its legal order of origin. The *Cour de cassation* held that it could not despite the fact the the certificate had not been withdrawn in its legal order of origin.

Facts

The parties were a German couple who had married in 1970 in Germany. They had separated 20 years later. The husband was paying maintenance to his wife. In 2005, she sued before a German court arguing that he was not paying her what he ought to and claiming almost 1 million euros. The husband had moved to

France, and thus probably did not hear about the case.

In October 2005, a Stuttgart Court issued a judgment ordering payment of 1 million euros. In January 2006, the same court certified the 2005 judgment as a European Enforcement Order. In December 2006, the wife attached a bank account and a house in France.

It seems that the husband realized at that point what had been going on in Germany. He challenged the German 2005 judgment in Stuggart, which transfered the case to a Court in Mainz. He also sought a stay of the enforcement proceedings in France, that he obtained. In 2007, the Mainz Court found that he owed nothing at all to his wife. She appealed. In 2008, the Court of appeal of Karlsruhe confirmed that she had no claim against her husband.

The husband then petitioned the French enforcement court to lift all enforcement measures carried out in France. The wife argued that this could not be done as long as she would have a valid EEO certificate. The French court disagreed and lifted all enforcement measures. The wife appealed to the Caen court of appeal, and then to the *Cour de cassation*.

Is the EEO Certificate Autonomous?

The reason why an EEO certificate must be issued is that it will then be the title used by enforcement authorities abroad to enforce the certified judgment. One could argue, therefore, that enforcement authorities in Europe should only be concerned with the EEO certificate.

In many of its provisions, the EEO Regulation provides that certificates wrongly issued must be withdrawn by the court of origin (see, eg, Article 10). Article 6 of the EEO Regulation even provides so for cases when the certified decision has ceased to be enforceable.

> *6.2 Where a judgment certified as a European Enforcement Order has ceased to be enforceable or its enforceability has been suspended or limited, a certificate indicating the lack or limitation of enforceability shall, upon application at any time to the court of origin, be issued, using the standard form in Annex IV.*

One possible interpretation of these provisions could be that certificates only stop producing their effects when they are withdrawn, and that they stand

autonomously until this happens.

Another interpretation, however, is that EEO certificates only facilitate the circulation of judgments, and they are therefore not autonomous. If such judgments disappear, they cannot stand anymore.

This interpretation is seemingly endorsed by the *Cour de cassation*, which relies on the following provision:

> *Article 11 Effect of the European Enforcement Order certificate*
>
> *The European Enforcement Order certificate shall take effect only within the limits of the enforceability of the judgment.*

The Court rules that the EEO certificate could thus not found enforcement measures in France after the German court of appeal had ruled that the German certified judgment was not enforceable anymore. Existing enforcement measure had to be lifted.

Liability

The French lower courts had also held the wife liable for abuse of process. The *Cour de cassation* confirms the liability of the holder of the certificate, who is found to have committed a wrong for continuing to enforce the certificate after the German court of appeal had finally ruled that the wife had no claim against her husband.

In France, creditors seeking to enforce EEO certificates after the underlying judgment has been finally set aside are thus committing a wrong.

Issue 2011.4 Nederlands Internationaal Privaatrecht

The fourth issue of 2011 of the Dutch journal on Private International Law, Nederlands Internationaal Privaatrecht includes the following articles on Brussels I and abolition of exequatur, the proposal European Arrest Preservation Order, Service of Documents and Intercountry surrogacy:

Xandra Kramer, Abolition of exequatur under the Brussels I Regulation: effecting and protecting rights in the European judicial area, p. 633-641. The abstract reads:

As a consequence of the policy to gradually abolish the exequatur in the EU, the Commission proposal on the Recast of Brussels I envisages the abolition of intermediate proceedings. In line with previous instruments that abolish the exequatur for specific matters or in relation to specific proceedings, the proposal at the same time intends to abolish most grounds to challenge the enforcement. It is submitted that recent instruments and proposals in the area of European civil procedure, including the Brussels I proposal, primarily focus on obtaining and effecting rights by the claimant, sometimes at the expense of the protection of the right to effectively defend oneself. As a way forward, it is viable to abolish the formality of the ex ante declaration of enforceability, while retaining the grounds to challenge the enforcement in the Member State of enforcement.

Bart-Jan van het Kaar, Het Europees bankbeslag en het Nederlands conservatoire derdenbeslag in Europees verband, p. 642-651. The English abstract reads:

This article deals with the international scope of a Dutch third party garnishment order. The scope of a third party garnishment order is in the current situation limited to the territory of the court granting this order (territorial effect). It is not possible to recognise and enforce such an order in accordance with the rules of the Brussels I Regulation. The judgment of the European Court of Justice in the Denilauler case (ECJ 21 May 1980, C-125/79) is a barrier against enforcement. It prevents granting any cross-border effect to a judgment delivered in ex parte proceedings, without the defendant being summoned to appear and the opportunity to be heard on the merits of the case. In most cases garnishment

orders are given on a purely ex parte basis, and therefore are barred from enforcement in another member state. There are two recent developments that might change this current situation. Firstly, the European Commission published a Proposal for a European Account Preservation Order ('EAPO') to facilitate cross-border debt recovery in civil and commercial matters (COM (2011) 445 final). This proposal introduces harmonised European proceedings through which a claimant can request the issuance of an EAPO with the aim of preserving and attaching bank accounts held in other member states. Secondly, there is the proposal by the European Commission to change or revise the Brussels I Regulation. In this proposal the Denilauler restriction is removed for ex parte decisions. This is the case for decisions granted by a court having jurisdiction on the substance of the matter (Arts. 2 and 5-23). Both developments put the international scope of a Dutch third party garnishment order into a different light. This paper discusses both proposals in depth and investigates if and to which extent this new set of rules will result in the future possibility for a Dutch court to grant cross-border effect to a garnishment order.

Chr.F. Kroes, Deformalisering van de internationale betekening in een drieslag. The English abstract reads:

In less than two years, the Dutch Supreme Court has handed down four decisions on the service of documents abroad in civil and commercial matters. The first decision concerns the Service Regulation. The Supreme Court finds that the Service Regulation does not apply if, under local rules, service may take place at the offices of the lawyer who was most recently instructed by the defendant. Such service is allowed in the case of opposition and an appeal, both to the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court. In its second and third judgment, the Supreme Court extended this rule to the Hague Convention on Service. In its fourth judgment, the Supreme Court found that, in the case of service on a foreign defendant at the offices of his (former) lawyer, only the short-term service needs to be observed that applies to domestic service and which is a week, instead of the four weeks that must be observed in case of the application of the Service Regulation or the Hague Convention. These decisions of the Supreme Court certainly make the practitioner's life somewhat easier, but they are not entirely free of any risks. It remains to be seen whether the judgments of the Supreme Court will stand up to the scrutiny of the European Court of Justice if recognition and enforcement pursuant to the Brussels Regulation would be challenged in a

judgment by default against a foreign defendant where service has only taken place in accordance with local rules.

Jinske Verhellen, Intercountry surrogacy: a comment on recent Belgian cases. The abstract reads:

This article has the modest goal of examining five recent Belgian judgments on cross-border surrogacy. In four cases Belgian commissioning parents approached a surrogate mother abroad (California, India and Ukraine) and subsequently asked for recognition of the foreign birth certificates in Belgium. The other case concerned a child that was born in Belgium and thereafter transferred to the Netherlands. On the basis of these cases the article elaborates on the Belgian rules of private international law and the current case-by-case approach of the Belgian judges. It becomes clear that cross-border surrogacy raises complex issues of private international law and child protection. Therefore, there is a pressing need for a more global approach.

Agreements in EU Council on Abolition of Exequatur and Succession

During its meeting of December 13-14, 2011, the Council of Ministers of the European Union has made decisions regarding some forthcoming private international law legislation. The Press Release states:

Main Results:

> *Ministers also reached agreement on the text of a regulation on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition and enforcement of decisions and authentic instruments in matters of* ***succession*** *and the creation of a European Certificate of Succession. On the recast of a regulation on* ***jurisdiction and the recognition and enforcement of judgments in civil and commercial***

matters *(the so-called "Brussels I" regulation), the Council approved political guidelines for further work.*

More specifically, the Council agreed:

Judgments in Civil and Commercial Matters

The Council agreed on political guidelines on the abolition of exequatur on judgements given on matters falling within the scope of the so-called Brussels I regulation.

(…)

The UK and Ireland have decided to take part in the adoption of the revised regulation. Once adopted, the revised regulation will also be applicable to Denmark in the context of the existing agreement between the EU and Denmark on the matter.

Succession

The Council reached very broad general agreement on the text of the regulation on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition and enforcement of decisions and authentic instruments in matters of succession and the creation of a European Certificate of Succession (18745/11 + ADD 1). (…)

In order to reach a general approach, further work is needed, in particular on two issues:

– the question of restoration of lifetime gifts ("clawback") where considerable differences between member states' legal systems exist: While some member states allow for clawback, others don't.

– the question of the administration of a deceased person's estate: Work will start immediately in order to prepare incoming negotiations with the European Parliament.

Open questions also exist on the recitals as well as the proposed standard forms.

In general, the proposed rules aim to make life easier for heirs, legatees and other interested parties.

The main provisions are:

– The draft act provides for the application of a basic connecting factor for determining both the jurisdiction of the courts and the law applicable to a succession with cross-border implications, namely the deceased's habitual residence at the time of death. The proposed Regulation will also allow a person to choose the law to govern the succession the aw of the State of his/her nationality. This rule would take some of the stress out of estate planning by creating predictability.

– The proposed rules will ensure mutual recognition and enforcement of decisions and mutual acceptance and enforcement of authentic instruments in succession matters.

– A European Certificate of Succession would be created to enable persons to prove their status and/or rights as heirs or their powers as administrator of the estate or executor of the will without further formalities. This should result in faster and cheaper procedures for all those involved in a succession with cross-border implications.
The UK and Ireland have not yet notified the Council that they will participate in the final adoption of the regulation, but have participated actively in the negotiations. Denmark will not take part in the adoption of the proposed regulation.

Many thanks to Niklaus Meier for the tip-off.

Symeonides on Choice of Law in American Courts in 2011

Dean Symeon C. Symeonides (Willamette University – College of Law) has posted Choice of Law in the American Courts in 2011: Twenty-Fifth Annual Survey on SSRN. It is, as usual, to be published in the *American Journal of Comparative Law* (Vol. 60, 2012). Here is the abstract:

This is the 25th Annual Survey of American Choice-of-Law Cases. It is intended as a service to fellow teachers and students of conflicts law, both within and outside the United States. The Survey covers cases decided by American state and federal appellate courts in 2011. The following are some of the cases discussed:

• Three Supreme Court decisions, one on general jurisdiction, one on specific jurisdiction, and one holding that the Federal Arbitration Act preempts state court rulings that protected consumers by refusing to enforce certain class-arbitration waivers.

• Two state supreme court cases refusing to enforce arbitration clauses that waive tort claims arising from gross negligence and criticizing the Supreme Court for "tendentious reasoning" and for creating new doctrines "from whole cloth."

• A New York case struggling with the Neumeier rules in a case involving the same pattern as Schultz, and a California case worthy of Traynor's legacy in delineating the extraterritorial reach of California statutes.

• A Delaware case holding that Delaware has an interest in "regulating the conduct of its licensed drivers," even when they drive in states with lower standards; a conflict between a dram shop act and an anti-dram shop act; and a product liability case in which a driver who crushed his car after taking a sleeping pill prevailed on the choice-of-law question.

• A case enforcing a foreign arbitration and choice-of-law clause prospectively waiving a seaman's federal statutory rights, even though there was little possibility for a subsequent review of the arbitration award.

• Several cases illustrating the operation of four competing approaches to statutes of limitation conflicts.

• A case rejecting a claim that a Sudanese cultural marriage was invalid because the groom had paid only 35 of the 50 cows he promised as dowry to the bride's father. • Two cases recognizing Canadian same-sex marriages.

• A case holding that the court had jurisdiction to terminate a father's parental rights without in personam jurisdiction over him, as long as the children were domiciled in the forum state.

• A case holding that a state's refusal to issue a revised birth certificate listing two unmarried same-sex partners as the child's parents after an adoption in another state did not violate the Full Faith and Credit clause.

• A case characterizing as penal and refusing to recognize a sister-state judgment imposing a fine for a violation of zoning restrictions.

• Several cases involving sex offenders required by sister-state judgments to register their place or residence, or terminating the obligation to register.

• Four federal appellate decisions holding that corporate defendants can be sued under the Alien Tort Statute for aiding and abetting in the commission of international law violations.

Agreements as to Succession

On the 31st. October the Spanish magazine *La Ley-Unión Europea* published a paper on Article 18 (Agreements as to succession) of the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition and enforcement of decisions and authentic instruments in matters of succession and the creation of a European Certificate of Succession. Authors, Professor Santiago Álvarez-González and Isabel Rodríguez-Uría-Suárez (University of Santiago de Compostela) highlight that the mere

existence of a special rule for agreements as to successions is to be welcome. Nevertheless, they propose some amendments to the current text and the need of rethinking some general options. Some of these proposals are similar to ones made by others scholars or Institutions (actually, authors agree on a wide extent with the Max Planck Comments); some others reflect the need to explore new solutions.

Authors propose the express inclusion of joint wills in the text of Article 18. They also consider that the substantive scope of the rules on applicable law to the agreements as to successions must be clarified, especially in its relationship with the lex succesionis. They disagree with the rule of Article 18 (4) of the Proposal. It is a rule that introduces a vast amount of uncertainty in the parties' expectations; this is the reason why they claim it must be suppressed. Furthermore, they consider than the place given to the possibility to make a choice of law to the whole agreement by the Article 18 (3) of the Proposal should be enlarged, allowing the parties involved in a such agreement to choose the law of the habitual residence of each of them and not only the law that they could have chosen in accordance with Article 17; that is, the law of each of their nationalities at the moment of choice.

The "rule of validation" of Article 18 (1) is analysed to conclude that, although it introduces an instrument to provide the *favor validitatis*, well acknowledged in comparative law, it could sometimes bring uncertainty as to the extent of the testamentary freedom (ie, parties are aware that the agreement they made is null and void according to the applicable law and the person whose succession is involved makes a new will). In the same sense, authors agree with the alternative solution (habitual residence of any of the persons whose succession is involved) provided by Article 18(2) for agreements concerning the succession of several persons, but they wonder whether such a conflict-rule-substantive approach is legitimate in the European Law context.