

ICCS Convention No. 29 on the recognition of decisions recording a sex reassignment

On March 1, 2011, the ICCS Convention No. 29 on the recognition of decisions recording a sex reassignment, adopted by the Lisbon General Assembly on 16 September 1999, and signed at Vienna on September 12, 2000, will enter into force. Two States have so far ratified the Convention: Spain in October 2010, and the Netherlands in 2004.

Under the Convention final court or administrative decisions recording a person's sex reassignment issued by the competent authorities in a Contracting State shall be recognized in other Contracting States, when at the time when the application was made the applicant was national or habitually resident in the State in which the decision was taken.

There are three exceptions to this rule:

- if the physical adaptation of the person concerned has not been carried out and has not been recorded in the decision in question
- recognition is contrary to public policy in the required Contracting State
- the decision has been obtained by fraudulent means

The State which recognizes a resolution pursuant to the Convention shall update the birth certificate of the person concerned, on the basis of the resolution and in the manner prescribed by its domestic law.

Dallah: French Court Pays No Attention to Lords' Lecture

The Paris Court of Appeal ruled yesterday on the action introduced by the Government of Pakistan to set aside the award which had ordered it to pay over USD 20 million to Dallah.

The Court found that the arbitral tribunal had been right to retain jurisdiction in this case, and dismissed the action of Pakistan.

We had already reported on the English decisions which had denied enforcement of this award in the United Kingdom. Quite remarkably, the English Court of appeal and then the UK Supreme court held that, **under French law**, the arbitral tribunal did not have jurisdiction.

It seems that French judges were unimpressed by the lectures that Lord Collins and Lord Mance gave on the French law of arbitration at this occasion.

Someone must now find a solution to this mess: Twickenham?

More on the reasons of the French court soon.

First Issue of 2011's Journal du Droit International

The first issue of French *Journal du droit international* (*Clunet*) for 2011 was just released. 

It includes three articles, two of which explore conflict issues.

In the first article, a leading French public international lawyer, Professor Mathias Forteau (Paris Ouest Nanterre University), offers his views on the concept of transnational public policy (*L'ordre public « transnational » ou «*

réellement international » . - *L'ordre public international face à l'enchevêtrement croissant du droit international privé et du droit international public*). The English abstract reads:

While private international law and public international law get closer in the contemporary international society, especially due to the widening of the realm of European law, apparently some legal notions still belong exclusively to private international law and their definition and enforcement remain within States' exclusive jurisdiction. This seems to be the case of the « international public policy » exception which aims at protecting national values when domestic judges are requested to apply a foreign law incompatible with these values. Contemporary practice shows however that international public policy is subject to a process of internationalisation which impacts both its sources and the mechanisms through which it is enforced. Such trend is not restricted to transnational law (« transnational public policy »). International public policy is nowadays also regulated by public international law – and may therefore be undergoing a metamorphosis of its meaning and function in a way which is not yet clearly well-defined.

In the second article, professor Benjamin Remy (Poitiers University) discusses the legitimacy of choice of court agreements (*De la profusion à la confusion : réflexions sur les justifications des clauses d'élection de for*). The English abstract reads:

Various justifications are usually summoned to explain the admission of choice of forum clauses : foreseeability of the judge, neutrality of the judge and the ability to choose a « better » judge. Unfortunately, this profusion leads to confusion when it comes to the definition of the appropriate rules governing such a clause. Firstly, ambiguities arise from the fact that most issues related to the choice of forum clauses are to be given different answers depending on the justification one has focused on. Therefore, the predictability of the rules governing the choice of forum clauses cannot be achieved. Secondly, the plurality of justifications seems to prevent any appreciation of their relevancy. Moreover, authors often use arguments which belong to different rhetorical systems, based on different justifications, leading to conclusions that cannot be reasonably justified.

Tourism and Jurisdiction to take Centre Stage in Supreme Court of Canada

On March 21, 22 and 25, 2011 the Supreme Court of Canada will hear appeals in four private international law cases. Each is a case in which the Ontario court has held that it has jurisdiction to hear the dispute and that the proceedings should not be stayed in favour of another forum.

Two of the cases – *Van Breda* ([information here](#)) and *Charron* ([information here](#)) – involve Ontarians who were killed or severely injured while on holiday in Cuba. They now seek to sue various foreign defendants in Ontario. These cases involve tourists in the traditional sense of the word. Two of the cases – *Banro* ([information here](#)) and *Black* ([information here](#)) – involve claims for defamation over the internet and damage to reputation in Ontario. There is some allegation that these cases involve what has become known as “libel tourism”, especially in England and in the United States.

Several parties have already been granted leave to appear as intervenors and others are seeking such leave. The decisions in these four cases could be very important for the Canadian law on jurisdiction.

The Supreme Court of Canada now posts PDFs of the written submissions of litigants as they are received, so those wanting more details about the cases should click on the “factums” button for each case.

Canadian Case on State Immunity

In *Kazemi (Estate of) v. Islamic Republic of Iran*, 2011 QCCS 196 (available [here](#)) the estate of Zahra Kazemi and her son, Stephan Kazemi, sued Iran and certain state officials in Quebec, alleging that in 2003 Ms. Kazemi was tortured and assassinated in Iran. The defendants argued that the claim could not succeed due to state immunity.

Much of the court's analysis involves the provisions of the *State Immunity Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. S-18. The court has to consider whether this statute is a complete code on the issue of state immunity or whether it is open to courts to create exceptions to the statutory immunity beyond those listed in the statute. The court also has to address whether aspects of the statute are constitutional.

The court ends up concluding that the estate has no claim because the wrongs done to her occurred in Iran and so are covered by the immunity under the statute. However, the court allows the claim by Stephan Kazemi, a claim for his own losses arising from hearing the reports of what was done to his mother, to continue since his losses were suffered in Quebec, not Iran, and so the immunity does not cover them (see section 6 of the statute).

The decision is lengthy (220 paragraphs), and yet it does not mention the recent decision of the Supreme Court of Canada on state immunity: *Kuwait Airways Corporation v. Republic of Iraq* from October 2010.

Green Paper on the Free Movement of Public Documents

On December 14th, 2010, the European Commission issued a Green Paper exploring whether the circulation of public documents should be simplified: *Less Bureaucracy for Citizens: Promoting Free Movement of Public Documents and Recognition of the Effects of Civil Status Records*.

Here are some of the possible reforms discussed by the Green Paper.

Public documents:

a) The abolition of administrative formalities for the authentication of public documents

The administrative formalities relating to the presentation of public documents, originally based on consular and intergovernmental practices, are still causing problems for European citizens and no longer meet the requirements or correspond to the state of development of contemporary society, in particular in an area of common justice.

The need for these formalities, which are not suitable for relations between Member States based on mutual trust or for increased mobility of citizens, can legitimately be questioned.

(...)

b) Cooperation between the competent national authorities

The abolition of administrative formalities could be accompanied by cooperation between the competent national authorities.

(...)

c) Limiting translations of public documents

In parallel with the administrative formalities such as legalisation and the apostille, the translation of a public document issued by another Member State is another procedure citizens may have to deal with. Just like the abovementioned administrative formalities, translation also represents a cost in terms of time and money.

Optional standard forms, at least for the most common public documents (for example a declaration of the loss or theft of identity papers or a wallet), could be introduced in a number of administrative sectors in order to cope with translation requests and avoid costs.

(...)

d) The European civil status certificate

European driving licences and passports already exist. A European certificate of inheritance has been proposed by the Commission. Thought might be given to introducing a European civil status certificate.

This would exist alongside Member States' national civil status records. It would be optional, not compulsory. Citizens could continue to ask for a national certificate. The European certificate would not therefore replace Member States' civil status certificates.

Civil Status Records:

Several solutions could be considered to ensure recognition of the effects of a civil status record or legal situation connected with civil status created in a Member State other than the one in which it is invoked. In this context, it is important to stress that the EU has no competence to intervene in the substantive family law of Member States. Therefore, the Commission has neither the power nor the intention to propose the drafting of substantive European rules on, for instance, the attribution of surnames in the case of adoption and marriage or to modify the national definition of marriage. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union does not provide any legal base for applying such a solution.

Against this background, several practical problems arising in the daily lives of citizens in cross-border situations could be solved by facilitating recognition of the effects of civil status records legally established in other EU Member States. The European Union has three policy options to deal with these problems: assisting national authorities in the quest for practical solutions; automatic recognition and recognition based on the harmonisation of conflict-of law rules.

The consultation will take place from 14 December 2010 to 30 April 2011.

Many thanks to Bram van der Eem for the tip-off.

PhD Positions Erasmus School of Law (Rotterdam)

The Erasmus School of Law has two vacancies for PhD candidates within the Research project 'Securing Quality in Cross-Border Enforcement: Towards European Principles of Civil Procedure'. This project is financed by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) within its prestigious Innovational Research Incentives Scheme (VIDI). Project supervisor is Prof. Dr. Xandra Kramer.

The Erasmus School of Law (Rotterdam, the Netherlands) offers an international and stimulating education and research environment, and has excellent terms of employment.

For more information and application click [here](#).

Buxbaum on Reception of Conflict Conventions in the U.S.

Hannah Buxbaum, who is a professor of law at the University of Indiana in Bloomington, has posted Conflict of Laws Conventions and Their Reception in National Legal Systems: Report for the United States on SSRN.

This is the U.S. national report on "Conflict of Laws Conventions and Their Reception in National Legal Systems," prepared for the Intermediate Congress of the International Academy of Comparative Law held in 2008. The report discusses the various mechanisms for implementation of conflict-of-laws conventions in the United States: through federal legislation, federal rulemaking and state legislation. It reviews the conflict-of-laws conventions to which the United States is party (including in the areas of family law and litigation procedure), as well as recent case-law under those conventions. It

also examines relevant aspects of U.S. law on treaties, discussing the issue of self-executing versus non-self executing treaties within the particular context of private law conventions.

Lugano Convention in force in Switzerland

We had reported earlier on the willingness of Switzerland to apply the 2007  Lugano Convention in 2011.

Switzerland has indeed ratified the Convention on October 20th, 2010. The notice of the ratification to the Contracting Parties can be found [here](#), and includes Switzerland's reservations and declarations.

Switzerland's official documents therefore provide that the Lugano Convention entered into force in Switzerland on January 1st, 2011. The Convention was meant to enter into force on the first day of the third month following the new ratification.

Thanks to Rafaël Jafferli for the tip-off

Kinsch on Choice of Law and the Prohibition of Discrimination

Patrick Kinsch, who is a visiting professor at the University of Luxembourg and the Secretary General of the European Group for Private International Law, has posted [Choice of Law and the Prohibition of Discrimination under the European](#)

Convention on Human Rights on SSRN. The abstract reads:

This article deals with the relevance, or irrelevance, of the principle of non-discrimination to that part of private international law that deals with choice of law. Non-discrimination potentially goes to the very core of conflict of laws rules as they are traditionally conceived – that, at least, is the idea at the basis of several academic schools of thought. The empirical reality of case law (of the European Court of Human Rights, or the equally authoritative pronouncements of national courts on similar provisions in national constitutions) is to a large extent different. And it is possible to adopt a compromise solution: the general principle of equality before the law may be tolerant towards multilateral conflict rules, but the position will be different where specific rules of non-discrimination are at stake, or where the rules of private international law concerned have a substantive content.

The paper is forthcoming in the *Nederlands Internationaal Privaatrecht*.