

# BIICL Research Fellowship in International Private Law

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The closing date for applications is November 10.

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## Japan Accedes to CISG

We do not usually report on uniform law, but Japan was one of the few major trading powers which had not acceded to the CISG.

The report of the United Nations Information Service is [here](#).

Is the UK next?

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## EC Commission Presents a Proposal for a Directive on

# Consumer Rights

On 8 October 2008, Commissioner Meglena Kuneva (DG Health and Consumers) presented a new Proposal for an EC directive on consumer rights (COM(2008) 614) (see the Consumer Acquis webpage).

The proposal aims to revise four existing directives on consumer contracts (the cornerstones of EC legislation in the field: Dir. 85/577/EEC on contracts negotiated away from business premises, Dir. 93/13/EEC on unfair terms in consumer contracts, Dir. 97/7/EC on distance contracts, Dir. 1999/44/EC on consumer sales and guarantees) merging them into a single horizontal instrument based on full-harmonisation (i.e. Member States cannot maintain or adopt provisions diverging from those laid down in the Directive), which regulates the common aspects “in a systematic fashion, simplifying and updating the existing rules, removing inconsistencies and closing gaps”.

The minimum harmonisation approach (i.e. Member States may maintain or adopt stricter consumer protection rules), adopted in the previous EC legislation in the field, was abandoned in order to avoid fragmentation in the level of consumer protection in the Member States (Impact Assessment Report, p. 8 ):

*The effects of the fragmentation are felt by business because of the conflict-of-law rules, and in particular the Rome I Regulation, which obliges traders not to go below the level of protection afforded to foreign consumers in their country. As a result of the fragmentation and Rome I, a trader wishing to sell cross-border into another Member State will have to incur legal and other compliance costs to make sure that he is respecting the level of consumer protection in the country of destination. These costs reduce the incentive for businesses to sell cross-border, particularly to consumers in small Member States. Such costs are eventually passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices or, worse, businesses refuse to sell cross-border. In both cases consumer welfare is below the optimum level.*

Quite interestingly, under a conflict-of-laws perspective, one of the main concerns of the Commission was to achieve a sound coordination between the proposed directive and the Rome I Regulation.

All the policy options which were assessed to draft the proposed legislation took into account the recent adoption of the regulation on the law applicable to contractual obligations (see the 6 options listed in the Explanatory Memorandum of the Commission, p. 5, and analysed in the Impact Assessment Report, p. 16 ff., and in the Annexes, p. 18 ff.):

- 1. Policy option 1: Status Quo or baseline scenario, including the effects of Rome I and forthcoming legislation.*
- 2. Policy option 2: Non legislative approaches, including information campaigns and financial contributions and the effects of Rome I.*
- 3. Policy option 3: Minimum legislative changes (harmonisation of basic concepts where benefits clearly outweigh costs), including the effects of Rome I.*
- 4. Policy option 4: Medium legislative changes (including PO 3 plus and the effects of Rome I).*
- 5. Policy option 5: Maximum legislative changes (including PO 4 plus far-reaching proposals granting new consumer rights as well as the effects of Rome I).*
- 6. Policy option 6: Minimum legislative changes (PO 3) or Medium legislative changes (PO 4) combined with an internal market clause applying to the non-fully harmonised aspects (such as general contract law aspects outside the scope of the Consumer Acquis).*

The latter option (insertion of an internal market clause) was excluded, since it was considered to be in contrast with the protective conflict rule of Art. 6 of the Rome I Regulation (Impact Assessment Report, p. 24):

*[A]n alternative to full harmonisation was put forth in the form of a minimum harmonisation approach combined with an Internal Market clause. This approach has been discussed during the consultation process.*

*Such an Internal Market clause could have taken the form of a mutual recognition clause or of a clause on the country of origin principle for the aspects falling within the scope of a future Directive and not subject to full harmonisation. A mutual recognition clause would give Member States the possibility to introduce stricter rules in their national law, but would not entitle a Member State to impose its own stricter requirements on businesses*

*established in other Member States in a way which would create unjustified restrictions to the free movement of goods or to the freedom to provide services. A clause based on the country of origin principle would give Member States the possibility to introduce stricter consumer protection rules in their national law, but businesses established in other Member States would only have to comply with the rules applicable in their country of origin.*

*Both variants of the Internal Market clause met considerable opposition from several categories of stakeholders. [...] Regulatory fragmentation combined with the Internal Market clause would achieve legal certainty for traders, but not for consumers, who would be subject to different laws with different levels of protection.*

*Finally, an Internal Market clause which would systematically subject the contract to the law chosen by the parties (which will normally be the law designated as applicable under the trader's standard contract terms) or to the law of the country of origin (i.e. the country where the trader is established) goes against the newly-adopted Rome I Regulation on the law applicable to contractual obligations. Indeed the clause would contrast with Article 6(1) of the Rome I Regulation, which provides that the law applicable to consumer contracts, in the absence of a choice made by the parties, is the law of the country where the consumer has his habitual residence (i.e. the law of the country of destination). It would also be in contrast with Article 6(2) of the Regulation which provides that the law chosen by the parties (e.g. the law of the country of the trader) cannot deprive the consumer of the protection granted by the law of his country of residence. Such an Internal Market clause would not be acceptable by the great majority of Member States, as evidenced by the public consultation on the Green Paper.*

The text of the new directive, in the current version proposed by the Commission, should not, *prima facie*, interfere with the application of the conflict rules of the Rome I Regulation, avoiding problems such as those arising from the e-commerce directive or from clauses inserted in the previous consumer directives (see for instance Art. 6(2) of Directive 93/13 on unfair contractual terms). See Recital no. 10 and no. 59:

*(10) The provisions of this Directive should be without prejudice to Regulation*

*(EC) No 593/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council applicable to contractual obligations (Rome I);*

*(59) The consumer should not be deprived of the protection granted by this Directive. Where the law applicable to the contract is that of a third country, Regulation (EC) No 593/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the law applicable to contractual obligations (Rome I) should apply, in order to determine whether the consumer retains the protection granted by this Directive.*

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## **Third Issue of 2008's Revue Critique Droit Int'l Privé**

The third issue of French *Revue Critique de Droit International privé* for 2008 will be released shortly. It will include four articles, all relating to conflict issues.

In the first article, Charalambos Pamboukis, who is a professor at the university of Athens, Greece, explores the renewal and metamorphosis of recognition as a method to address conflicts problems (*La renaissance-métamorphose de la méthode de la reconnaissance*). The English abstract reads:

*The recent renewal of a methodology of recognition is the result of two factors. First, a political factor. Globalisation requires international coherence for private relationships, while the construction of Europe reconstitutes a community of laws. A paradigm change emerges. Second, a technical factor. Traditional conflict rules are not adapted to the recognition of legal relationships which already exist. The characteristic of the method of recognition is its function of confirmation and reception, and its object, which is a concrete, pre-existing legal relationship. It excludes any recourse to the conflict rule, but it does not necessarily represent an underhand form of lex forism nor does it signify reverse discrimination. But its scope is still uncertain, since it covers relationships which have been consecrated by an official but*

*created by private actors. The latter distinction could contribute to clarify the much debated issue.*

In the second second article, Marie-Elodie Ancel wonders what the Rome I Regulation will change for distribution contracts (*Les contrats de distribution et la nouvelle donne du règlement Rome I*). The author, who is a professor of international private law at Paris Val-de-Marne (Paris XII) university, has kindly provided the following abstract:

*According to French case law, distribution contracts are governed by the law of the manufacturer in the absence of a choice of law and the forum contractus is determined under Article 5.1 a) of the Brussels I Regulation. This study examines how the French Cour de cassation has been led to these solutions and how Article 4.1 and Recital 17 of the Rome I Regulation take the opposite course.*

The third article is a comprehensive study of the Rome II Regulation by Geneva professor Thomas Kadner Graziano (*Le nouveau droit international privé communautaire en matière de responsabilité extracontractuelle*).

Finally, the fourth article is an essay on class actions in international private law building on the American *Vivendi Universal* case (*Régulation de l'économie globale et l'émergence de compétences déléguées : sur le droit international privé des actions de groupe (à propos de l'affaire Vivendi Universal)*). Its author is Horatia Muir Watt, who teaches at Paris I university.

At the present time, I do not have an English abstract for the last two pieces.

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**Book: Liber Amicorum Hélène**

# Gaudemet-Tallon



The French publisher Dalloz has recently published a very rich collection of essays in honor of **Hélène Gaudemet-Tallon**, Professor Emeritus at the University of Paris II and Associate Member of the *Institut de Droit International*, one of French leading scholars in the field of conflicts of laws and jurisdictions (among her recent works, see *Le pluralisme en droit international privé, Richesses et faiblesse (le funambule et l'arc en ciel)*, General Course held in 2005 at the Hague Academy of International Law, and the forthcoming fourth edition of her authoritative book on the Brussels I reg., *Compétence et exécution des jugements en Europe*).

The volume, ***Vers de nouveaux équilibres entre ordres juridiques. Liber amicorum Hélène Gaudemet-Tallon***, includes 50 articles on almost all fields of Private International Law, written by leading academics.

Here's the table of contents:

## **LE PLURALISME NORMATIF: DE LA COMPARAISON A LA COORDINATION**

- *Ancel, Jean-Pierre*, L'invocation d'un droit étranger et le contrôle de la Cour de cassation
- *Basedow, Jürgen*, La recherche juridique fondamentale dans les instituts Max Planck
- *Bermann, George A.*, La concertation réglementaire transatlantique
- *Borras, Alegria*, La fragmentation des sources de droit international privé communautaire, le cas de la responsabilité nucléaire
- *Fauvarque-Cosson, Bénédicte*, Droit international privé et droit comparé : brève histoire d'un couple à l'heure de l'Europe
- *Foyer, Jacques*, Diversité des droits et méthodes des conflits de loi
- *Herzog, Peter E.*, Le début de la " révolution " des conflits de lois aux États-Unis et les principes fondamentaux de la proposition " Rome II ", y a-t-il un " parallélisme inconscient " ?
- *Idot, Laurence*, À propos de l'internationalisation du droit, réflexions sur la Soft Law en droit de la concurrence

- *Kessedjian, Catherine*, Le droit entre concurrence et coopération

## **L'UNIVERSALISATION DU DROIT ET DU CONTENTIEUX**

- *Ancel, Bertrand; Watt, Horatia Muir*, Les jugements étrangers et la règle de conflit de lois, chronique d'une séparation
- *Audit, Bernard*, Observations sur la convention de La Haye du 30 juin 2005 relative aux accords d'élection de for
- *Cachard, Olivier*, La force obligatoire vis-à-vis du destinataire des clauses relatives à la compétence internationale stipulées dans les connaissements : plaider pour un renouveau des considérations maritimes
- *Cadiet, Loïc*, Les sources internationales de la procédure civile française
- *Dutheil de la Rochère, Jacqueline*, Sanctions internationales contre les personnes et respect des droits fondamentaux
- *Fallon, Marc*, L'applicabilité du règlement " Bruxelles I " aux situations externes après l'avis 1/03
- *Gannage, Léna*, À propos de l'" absolutisme " des droits fondamentaux
- *Gannage, Pierre*, Regards sur les compétences judiciaires exclusives
- *Guinchard, Serge*, Entre identité nationale et universalisme du droit : l'idée et le processus d'introduction d'un recours collectif en droit français
- *Huet, André*, Le nouvel article 15 du Code civil
- *Jessurun d'Oliveira, Hans Ulrich*, Turmoil Around a Naturalisation Decree, or, How the Dutch Cabinet stumbled over a Pebble
- *Kerameus, Konstantinos D.*, La convention de Bruxelles et l'harmonisation par la jurisprudence en Europe: libres propos sur la convention de Bruxelles
- *Kreuzer, Karl*, International Instruments on Human Rights and " Shariah " Law
- *Loon, Hans van*, Vers un nouveau modèle de gouvernance multilatérale de la migration internationale: réflexions à partir de certaines techniques de coopération de développement au sein de la Conférence de La Haye
- *Niboyet, Marie-Laure*, Contre le dogme de la lex fori en matière de procédure
- *Pataut, Étienne*, Notifications internationales et règlement " Bruxelles I "
- *Vareilles-Sommieres, Pascal de*, La compétence internationale de

## **LA PRESERVATION DES VALEURS LOCALES**

- *Gautier, Pierre-Yves*, La contrariété à l'ordre public d'une décision étrangère, échec à sa reconnaissance ou son exequatur
- *Kinsch, Patrick*, La "sauvegarde de certaines politiques législatives", cas d'intervention de l'ordre public international ?
- *Mayer, Pierre*, L'étendue du contrôle, par le juge étatique, de la conformité des sentences arbitrales aux lois de police

## **L'INTEGRATION REGIONALE, ESPACE D'EXPERIMENTATION DU PLURALISME**

- *Lagarde, Paul*, La reconnaissance, mode d'emploi
- *Lequette, Yves*, De Bruxelles à La Haye : réflexions critiques sur la compétence communautaire en matière de droit international privé?
- *Pironon, Valérie*, Les pratiques commerciales déloyales entre droit international privé et droit communautaire
- *Pluyette, Gérard; Moneger, Françoise*, Quelques aspects récents de la jurisprudence de la Première chambre civile en matière de droit communautaire international
- *Pocar, Fausto*, Faut-il remplacer le renvoi au droit national par des règles uniformes ?
- *Poillot-Peruzzetto, Sylvaine*, Le défi de la construction de l'espace de liberté, de sécurité et de justice
- *Reymery, Jean-Pierre*, Aspects maritimes du droit international privé communautaire
- *Struycken, Teun*, L'ordre public de la Communauté européenne
- *Vrellis, Spyridon*, "Abus" et "fraude" dans la jurisprudence de la Cour de Justice des Communautés européennes

## **LE CONTRAT ET LA FAMILLE AU CŒUR DES EQUILIBRES ENTRE ORDRES JURIDIQUES**

- *Azzi, Tristan*, L'office du juge dans la mise en œuvre de la convention de Rome du 19 juin 1980 sur la loi applicable aux obligations contractuelles
- *Bogdan, Michael*, Foreign Public Law and Article 7 (1) of the Rome Convention : Some Reflections from Sweden

- *Bucher, Andreas*, L'intérêt de l'enfant pénètre la convention sur l'enlèvement
- *Courbe, Patrick*, L'influence des réformes du droit de la famille sur le droit international privé
- *Hartley, Trevor C.*, The Proposed "Rome I" Regulation : Applicable Law in the Absence of Choice (Article 4)
- *Jacquet, Jean-Michel*, Le principe d'autonomie entre consolidation et évolution
- *Lando, Ole*, Choice of "Lex Mercatoria"
- *Morse, Robin*, Choice of Law, Territoriality and National Law : the Case of Employment
- *Pauknerova?, Monika*, The "contrat sans loi" in Czech and European Private International Law
- *Revillard, Marie-L.*, L'harmonisation du droit international privé de la famille dans la pratique notariale
- *Siehr, Kurt*, Divorce of Muslim Marriages in Secular Courts
- *Teyssié, Bernard*, La loi applicable aux accords transnationaux d'entreprise ou de groupe

Title: **Vers de nouveaux équilibres entre ordres juridiques - Liber amicorum Hélène Gaudemet-Tallon**. May 2008 (886 pages).

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*(Many thanks to Gilles Cuniberti and Etienne Pataut)*

# **ECJ on Hassett v South Eastern Health Board and Art 22(2) Brussels I**

The European Court of Justice handed down judgment in *Hassett v South Eastern Board* on 2nd October 2008. It doesn't make for particularly interesting

reading, so I'll be brief. The Irish Supreme Court referred the following question to the ECJ:

*Where medical practitioners form a mutual defence organisation taking the form of a company, incorporated under the laws of one Member State, for the purpose of providing assistance and indemnity to its members practising in that and another Member State in respect of their professional practice, and the provision of such assistance or indemnity is dependent on the making of a decision by the Board of Management of that company, in accordance with its Articles of Association, in its absolute discretion, are proceedings in which a decision refusing assistance or indemnity to a medical practitioner practising in the other Member State pursuant to that provision is challenged by that medical practitioner as involving a breach by the company of contractual or other legal rights of the medical practitioner concerned to be considered to be proceedings which have as their object the validity of a decision of an organ of that company for the purposes of Article 22, [point] 2, of [Regulation No 44/2001] so that the courts of the Member State in which that company has its seat have exclusive jurisdiction?*

Which the ECJ took to mean:

*By that question, the national court is essentially asking the Court whether point 2 of Article 22 of Regulation No 44/2001 is to be interpreted as meaning that proceedings, such as those at issue before the referring court, in the context of which one of the parties alleges that a decision adopted by an organ of a company has infringed rights that it claims under that company's Articles of Association, concern the validity of the decisions of the organs of a company within the meaning of that provision.*

And to which they answered:

*Point 2 of Article 22 of Council Regulation (EC) No 44/2001 of 22 December 2000 on jurisdiction and the recognition and enforcement of judgments in civil and commercial matters is to be interpreted as meaning that proceedings, such as those at issue before the referring court, in the context of which one of the parties alleges that a decision adopted by an organ of a company has infringed rights that it claims under that company's Articles of Association, do not*

*concern the validity of the decisions of the organs of a company within the meaning of that provision.*

The reasoning, such that it was, centred on the fact that allowing all disputes involving a decision by an organ of a company to come within Article 22(2) of the Brussels I Regulation (which is primarily there, so says the Jenard Report, to prevent conflicting judgments) would mean that it would apply to those disputes where conflicting judgments would *not* arise. That is beyond the scope of Article 22(2). As the doctors had not challenged the validity of a decision before the national courts (they were instead challenging the process (or lack thereof) of that decision, and so did not come within the defined scope of Art 22(2). Fair point, really.

*(Hat-tip to Andrew Dickinson.)*

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## **Spanish PIL periodicals (II): Anuario Español de Derecho Internacional Privado**

The Anuario Español de Derecho Internacional Privado is an annual magazine specialized in Private International law. It was born in 2000 on an ambitious initiative of Prof. Dr. José Carlos Fernández Rozas (Complutense University, Madrid), in order to provide the Spanish scientific community with accurate and updated information about conflicts of laws in a wide range of subjects, such as commercial arbitration, procedural law, contracts law, tort law, property rights or family and succession law. Besides doctrinal contributions, every volume includes reference to the latest legislative reforms, both Spanish or relating to the Community, and to the international agreements signed by our country in the field of Private International Law. Punctual news of the work in progress or achieved in different international forums (UNIDROIT, UNICUTRAL, The Hague Conference, etc) are also enclosed, as well as deep and critical studies of the

jurisprudence and of the administrative Spanish practice on PIL.

The publication is constructed in different sections, some of which are fixed. Each issue begins with an ambitious doctrinal title that gathers relevant scientific contributions from Spanish and foreign authors -translated into Spanish. It is usually followed by a section on legislation (Textos legales), and another, quite exhaustive one, on case law (Jurisprudencia: each volume systematizes several hundreds of decisions of the Spanish courts). A third section reproduces practices materials (Materiales de la práctica española). The Anuario also reports on national and international congresses, meetings and seminars, and gives notice of the whole Spanish bibliography on PIL (research monographs as well as editorials), appeared throughout the year.

Contents of the Anuario's latest issue:

Juan Antonio CARRILLO SALCEDO: IN MEMORIAM JULIO D. GONZÁLEZ CAMPOS

#### DOCTRINA

- Santiago ÁLVAREZ GONZÁLEZ  
LA LEY DE ADOPCIÓN INTERNACIONAL. REFLEXIONES A LA LUZ DE SU TEXTO, DE SUS OBJETIVOS Y DE LA COMUNIÓN ENTRE AMBOS
- Gloria ESTEBAN DE LA ROSA  
LA ADAPTACIÓN DE LOS CONTRATOS EN EL COMERCIO INTERNACIONAL

II SEMINARIO INTERNACIONAL: "LA NUEVA REGULACIÓN DE LA LEY APLICABLE A LAS OBLIGACIONES EXTRA CONTRACTUALES" (MADRID, 21 y 22 DE FEBRERO DE 2008)

- José Luis IGLESIAS BUHIGUES  
EL LARGO CAMINO DEL REGLAMENTO "ROMA II"
- Rafael GIL-NIEVAS  
EL PROCESO NEGOCIADOR DEL REGLAMENTO "ROMA II": OBSTÁCULOS Y RESULTADOS
- Marc FALLON  
LA RELACIÓN DEL REGLAMENTO "ROMA II" CON OTRAS NORMAS DE CONFLICTO DE LEYES

- Stefan LEIBLE  
EL ALCANCE DE LA AUTONOMÍA DE LA VOLUNTAD EN LA DETERMINACIÓN DE LA LEY APLICABLE A LAS OBLIGACIONES CONTRACTUALES EN EL REGLAMENTO “ROMA II”
- Francisco J. GARCIMARTÍN ALFÉREZ  
UN APUNTE SOBRE LA LLAMADA “REGLA GENERAL” EN EL REGLAMENTO “ROMA II”
- Miguel AMORES CONRADI y Elisa TORRALBA MENDIOLA  
DIFAMACIÓN Y “ROMA II”
- Luigi MARI  
LA SUBROGACIÓN EN EL REGLAMENTO (CE) Nº 864/2007: ASPECTOS PROBLEMÁTICOS
- Iván HEREDIA CERVANTES  
LAS DEFICIENCIAS DE LA REGLA DE RESPONSABILIDAD MÚLTIPLE DEL REGLAMENTO “ROMA II”
- Pilar JIMÉNEZ BLANCO  
EL RÉGIMEN DE LAS ACCIONES DIRECTAS EN EL REGLAMENTO DE “ROMA II”
- Rafael ARENAS GARCÍA  
LA REGULACIÓN DE LA RESPONSABILIDAD PRECONTRACTUAL EN EL REGLAMENTO “ROMA II”
- José Blas FUENTES MAÑAS  
LA REGLA LEX LOCI DELICTI COMMISSI Y NORMAS LOCALIZADORAS ESPECIALES EN EL REGLAMENTO “ROMA II”
- Diana SANCHO VILLA  
EXCLUSIÓN DE LA RESPONSABILIDAD DEL ESTADO POR ACTOS IURE IMPERII EN RO-MA II: CONSIDERACIONES SOBRE LA APLICACIÓN DEL REGLAMENTO A LA RES- PONSABILIDAD DEL ESTADO POR ACTOS IURE GESTIONES
- Leonel PEREZNIETO CASTRO  
LA RESPONSABILIDAD EXTRA CONTRACTUAL EN MÉXICO Y LAS NUEVAS LEYES SOBRE LA MATERIA
- Pedro DE MIGUEL ASENSIO  
LA LEX LOCI PROTECTIONIS TRAS EL REGLAMENTO “ROMA II”
- Tito BALLARINO  
EL DERECHO ANTITRUST COMUNITARIO Y EL ART. 6 DEL REGLAMENTO “ROMA II” (RÉGIMEN CONFLICTUAL Y TERRITORIAL,

EFFECTO DIRECTO)

- Benedetta UBERTAZZI  
EL REGLAMENTO CE SOBRE LAS PRUEBAS Y LA DESCRIPCIÓN DE LA VIOLACIÓN DE LOS DERECHOS DE PROPIEDAD INTELECTUAL
- Elena RODRÍGUEZ PINEAU  
LEY APLICABLE A LA RESPONSABILIDAD DERIVADA DE ACTOS CONTRARIOS A LA LIBRE COMPETENCIA
- Laura CARBALLO PIÑEIRO  
DERECHO DE COMPETENCIA, INTERESES COLECTIVOS Y SU PROYECCIÓN PROCESAL. OBSERVACIONES A PROPÓSITO DEL ART. 6 DEL REGLAMENTO “ROMA II”
- Luis GARAU JUANEDA  
LA CONVENIENCIA DE UNA DENUNCIA POR PARTE DE ESPAÑA DEL CONVENIO DE LA HAYA DE 1971 SOBRE RESPONSABILIDAD CIVIL DERIVADA DE LOS ACCIDENTES DE CIRCULACIÓN
- Ángel ESPINIELLA MENÉNDEZ  
ACCIDENTES DE CIRCULACIÓN POR CARRETERA: DEL CONVENIO DE LA HAYA DE 4 DE MAYO DE 1971 AL REGLAMENTO (CE) Nº 864/2007 (“ROMA II”)
- Amalia URIONDO DE MARTINOLI  
ACCIDENTES DE CIRCULACIÓN POR CARRETERA EN EL DERECHO INTERNACIONAL PRIVADO ARGENTINO
- Gilberto BOUTIN I.  
EL RÉGIMEN DE LAS OBLIGACIONES QUE SE CONTRAEN SIN CONVENIO - QUASI EX CONTRACTUS - EN EL DERECHO INTERNACIONAL PRIVADO PANAMEÑO Y EN EL CÓDIGO BUSTAMANTE
- Nicolás ZAMBRANA  
DERECHO INTERNACIONAL, DERECHOS HUMANOS Y RESPONSABILIDAD EXTRA-CONTRACTUAL
- Bertrand ANCEL  
EL REGLAMENTO “ROMA II”: APRECIACIÓN DE CONJUNTO

VARIA

- Rafael ARENAS GARCÍA  
EL FORO DE LA PLURALIDAD DE DEMANDADOS ANTE EL TJCE.

COMENTARIO A LA STJCE (SALA TERCERA) DE 11 DE OCTUBRE DE 2007

- Federico F. GARAU SOBRINO

EL TJCE NUEVO LEGISLADOR COMUNITARIO (O CÓMO CREAR POR VÍA DE HECHO UN NUEVO FORO PARA LAS VÍCTIMAS DE LOS ACCIDENTES DE CIRCULACIÓN)

- Ana FERNÁNDEZ PÉREZ

LOS RECURSOS DE INCONSTITUCIONALIDAD CONTRA LAS LEYES DE EXTRANJERÍA

- Rosa MIQUEL SALA

EL LIBRO VERDE SOBRE SUCESIONES Y TESTAMENTOS: PRIMEROS PASOS HACIA EL REGLAMENTO “BRUSELAS IV”

TEXTOS LEGALES (UNIÓN EUROPEA / COMUNIDAD EUROPEA; LEGISLACIÓN ESPAÑOLA; CONVENIOS INTERNACIONALES)

JURISPRUDENCIA

FOROS INTERNACIONALES

NOTICIAS

BIBLIOGRAFÍA (NACIONAL/EXTRANJERA)

REVISTA DE REVISTAS

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# Jurisdiction to Prevent the End of the World

Which court has jurisdiction to prevent the end of the world? Any, one would think: after all, the end of the world is likely to have serious consequences pretty much everywhere. 

Is that why an American retired radiation safety officer and a Spanish science writer decided to initiate proceedings in Hawaiï to stop the running of the new Large Hadron Collider, a giant particle accelerator operating on the Swiss-French border near Geneva? The plaintiffs fear that the Collider might create a black hole

which would spell the end of the Earth. No doubt, that would have an impact even in Hawai.

The defendants were the European Center for Nuclear Research (CERN), the U.S. Department of Energy, the U.S. National Science Foundation and the U.S. Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (Fermilab). In an interview to the *New York Times*, one of the plaintiffs revealed that his strategy focused on American parties. He did not know whether CERN would show up, but he had added it as a party to save expenses. In any case, part of the project was funded by the Department of Energy and the National Science Foundation, and the magnets of the Collider are supplied and maintained by Fermilab.

The complaint argued that the defendants had failed to comply with American legislation, namely the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and also with the European precautionary principle.

As the *New York Times* reported, on September 26, 2008, the Hawai District Court declined jurisdiction.

The order of the Court, which can be found here, is disappointing from a conflict's perspective. This is because Judge Gillmor was able to dismiss the action solely on domestic grounds. In other words, she held that the court lacked jurisdiction within the American legal system, as a federal court, which is not to say that an American state court would have lacked jurisdiction.

American federal courts are courts of limited jurisdiction. This means that this is for plaintiffs to demonstrate that the court has subject matter jurisdiction. Here, the plaintiffs solely argued that the court had federal question jurisdiction, i.e. that this was an action "arising under" U.S. federal law. The federal law that they put forward was NEPA. However, NEPA requires that there be a "major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment" (42 USC §4332 (c)). The court finds that there was no such major federal action in that case. As a consequence, it rules that there is no federal question, and that it lacks jurisdiction on this ground as a U.S. federal court.

The court further rules that no other ground for subject matter jurisdiction were put forward by the plaintiffs and that they had the burden of doing so. Thus, there might have been other grounds to found the subject matter jurisdiction of the court. For instance, neither federal party jurisdiction, nor diversity jurisdiction

are discussed.

Finally, the court rules that it does not need to address the issue of whether the plaintiffs had standing, given that their allegation of an injury was arguably “conjectural and hypothetical”.

Meanwhile, a suit was also filed before the European Court of Human Rights (see the report of the *Telegraph* here). I don't know whether this action is more likely to be successful, but Strasbourg is certainly closer to Geneva than Honolulu.

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## **Conference on Judicial Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe**

The final program for the international conference titled “**Regional Cooperation in the Field of Civil Proceedings with an International Element**” was distributed this week. This is actually the sixth regional conference where academics and practitioners exchange their views and comments on different topics of conflict of laws and related areas. Commencing in 2002 in Niš (Serbia), these conferences continued in the following years in Maribor (Slovenia), Belgrade (Serbia), Zagreb (Croatia) and Be?i?i (Montenegro). This year the Faculty of Law of the Univeristy of Banja Luka (Bosnia and Hercegovina) is hosting the conference from 16 to 18 October 2008. The conference is to be held in the hotel Bosna.

The topics to be presented and discussed are divided into four sections as follows:

### **Comparative Legislation and Practice in the European Union Member States**

Christa Jessel-Holst (Max Planck Institute for Foreign and Private International Law, Hamburg), *Regional Cooperation in the Field of Civil Proceedings with an International Element - the Case of South East Europe*

Bea Verschraegen (University of Vienna), *Critical Appraisal of Brussels II a Regulation*

Vesna Lazi? (Utrecht University and T.M.C. Asser Institute), *Improving Service of Judicial and Extrajudicial Documents in European Union: the Regulation (EC) No. 1393/2007 of 13 November 2007*

### **Comparative Legislation and Practice in the Countries of the Region**

Bernadet Bordaš (University of Novi Sad), *Regional Cooperation for the Improvement of the National Courts Proceedings - Selected Practical Examples*

Suzana Kralji? (University of Maribor), *Problems of International Adoption in Slovenia*

Ivana Kunda (University of Rijeka), *Regional Cooperation in the Field of Civil Proceedings with a Cross-Border Element: Practice of the Croatian Courts in Applying the Hague and Bilateral Conventions*

Toni Deskoski (University "Ss Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje), *International Legal Aid According to Bilateral Agreements Concluded by the Republic of Macedonia*

Vladimir ?olovi? (University Megatrend, Belgrade), *Regulating International Legal Aid in Insolvency Proceedings with an International Element*

Valerija Šaula (University of Banja Luka), *Regional Cooperation in the Field of Civil Proceedings with International Element in the Legislation and Practice of the Republic of Srpska*

### **Practical Problems**

Nikola Sladoje, Assistant Minister of Justice of Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Practical Problems in Requesting and Providing International Legal Aid - Bosnia and Herzegovina Experience*

Mirko Živkovi? (University in Niš), *Municipal Civil Registers and Social Work Centres in Serbia - Some Issues of Private International Law*

Jasmina Alihodži? (University in Tuzla), *Presumed Reciprocity Principle in the Function of Efficient Implementation of International Legal Aid in the Region Countries*

### **Other Issues and Problems**

Maja Stanivukovi? (University in Novi Sad), *Default Interest Rate Applicable to Foreign Currency in Contractual Claims Governed by the Serbian Law*

Ana Kneževi?-Bojovi? (Union University in Belgrade), *Insolvency Proceedings with an International Element*

Michael Wietzorek (Friedrich-Alexander University, Erlangen-Nürnberg), *Particularities of United States of America Procedural Law from a German Perspective*

Predrag Cvetkovi? (University in Niš), *Relationship between the Communitarian and the Law of the World Trade Organization (WTO): Basic Considerations*

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# **Incorporation of 2000 Hague Convention in English Law**

I reported earlier on the entry into force of the 2000 Hague Convention on the International Protection of Adults.

An interesting issue is the application of the Convention in England and Wales. The United Kingdom ratified the Convention, but only for Scotland. However, in the English *Mental Capacity Act 2005*, it is provided that the Convention applies in England and Wales.

Richard Frimston was able to clarify the situation in the following comment:

*The Ministry of Justice have clarified the position. The United Kingdom has under Article 55 declared that its ratification only extends to Scotland. This is so notwithstanding the fact that section 63 of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (the Act) specifically states that Schedule 3 of the Act gives effect in England and Wales to Convention XXXV (in so far as the Act does not otherwise do so), and makes related provision as to the private international law of England and Wales.*

*SI 2007/1897 makes it clear that both section 63 and Schedule 3 have taken effect from 1 October 2007 save that by paragraph 35 of the Schedule to the Act, paragraphs 8 [jurisdiction in relation to non residents], 9 [jurisdiction in*

*relation to convention countries], 19(2) and 19(5) [protective measures made by convention countries], Part 5 [co-operation with convention countries], and paragraph 30 [Article 38 certificates given by convention countries] only come into force, when Convention XXXV itself enters into force under Article 57.*

*However this does not mean that England & Wales has ratified. The existing declaration under Article 55 still operates and although Convention XXXV is effective in England & Wales, England & Wales has not yet actually ratified the Convention.*

*Paragraphs 8, 9, 19(2) and 19(5), Part 5, and paragraph 30 however are not limited to coming into force solely when England & Wales ratifies, but only when Convention XXXV itself enters into force. Therefore these provisions will also come into force in England & Wales on January 1 2009. Convention XXXV therefore will have full effect in England & Wales from January 1 2009, but for the purposes of the law in Scotland, France or Germany, England & Wales has not ratified.*

*The UK Ministry of Justice has made it clear that “England & Wales is committed to extending Convention XXXV as soon as possible. The work for this is under way”.*

*Schedule 3 does of course now set out the private international law in England & Wales and therefore in addition to setting out the rules for jurisdiction and recognition in England & Wales Schedule 3 also sets out the applicable law and therefore the rules as to which lasting powers are or are not valid. A lasting power validly made in South Australia by a person habitually resident in South Australia is now valid whenever the power was made. An English Enduring Power of Attorney made by a person habitually resident in a state where such powers are not valid, may now be invalid, even if made at a time when Schedule 3 to the Act did not apply.*

*The difficulty that Schedule 3 extends Convention XXXV to the applicable law issues of Lasting Powers not only of adults subject to incapacity but also to all Lasting Powers, including those of persons not subject to incapacity remains. Other ratifying states will not recognise this extension of the Convention.*

**What is remarkable about the *Mental Capacity Act* is that it makes applicable in a**

domestic legal order an international treaty which is not applicable from an international perspective. Thus, in effect, the domestic law incorporates the international convention in the domestic legal order. In this case, as the UK is working on extending the application of the Convention to England and Wales, it seems close to an early entry into force.

In other instances, however, states have incorporated international conventions that they had ratified for cases beyond their scope. This was the case of Italy which decided to incorporate the Brussels Convention into Italian law to replace its common law of jurisdiction in civil and commercial matters (see art. 3 of the 1995 Italian law of international private law).

Is that acceptable for the contracting states of the relevant Convention? For the organisation which supervised the negotiation of the relevant convention such as the Hague Conference?