

THE EUROPEAN COURT OF JUSTICE
AND THE AUTONOMY OF THE MEMBER STATES

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OF THE MEMBER STATES

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Hans-W. Micklitz and Bruno De Witte (eds.)

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FOREWORD

The Lisbon Treaty has, once again, extended the jurisdiction of the Court of Justice of the European Union to new areas of EU law. The field of criminal justice and police cooperation, covered by the former ‘third pillar’ of the European Union, will from now on be subject to the full review and interpretation powers of the Court of Justice. In the field of immigration law, lower national courts are now entitled to engage with the Court of Justice through the preliminary reference mechanism, and they have started to make active use of that new possibility. The EU Charter of Rights has now the same legal value as the Treaties themselves, thus opening up yet another field for active intervention by the Court of Justice. We find ourselves in front of a seeming paradox: whereas *individual* Member State governments occasionally complain about judgments of the Court of Justice, especially when those judgments curtail that state’s policy autonomy in a sensitive domain, the *collectivity* of the Member State governments have agreed, in each treaty revision so far, to confirm and extend the far-reaching powers which the Court of Justice possesses for enforcing EU law. The explanation of the paradox can only be that, deep down, the Member States of the EU remain convinced that an effective Court of Justice with strong enforcement powers is one of the salient features of European Community law which have stood the test of time, and feel no inclination to clip the wings of that Court for fear that this would affect the effectiveness of the European integration process. Nevertheless, the grumblings about single judgments, or about the consistency and direction of the Court in particular policy fields, have never ceased, and indeed have become more audible in recent years. One overall theme in this respect is the perception that the Court of Justice, quite often, does not leave sufficient autonomy to the Member States in developing their own legal and policy choices in areas where European and national competences overlap.

This overall theme was explored at a conference organised at the European University Institute in Florence in 2009, and was later elaborated in the chapters of this volume. The editors of the volume would like to express their gratitude to the generous sponsors of the conference, namely the Academy of European Law of the EUI, and the European Union Democracy Observatory programme, also based at the EUI. They are grateful for the friendly, patient and efficient cooperation of Intersentia publishers. This book owes a great debt to Hanna

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Hans Micklitz and Bruno De Witte
Florence/Maastricht, October 2011.

CONTENTS

Foreword..... v

PART I. INTRODUCTION

Judge-Made Integration?
Hans-W. MICKLITZ and Hanna SCHEBESTA 3

1. Introduction 3
2. Introducing the Authors' Contributions..... 4

PART II. THE GENERAL SHAPE OF MEMBER STATE AUTONOMY IN THE COURT'S CASE LAW

Competence and Member State Autonomy: Causality, Consequence and
Legitimacy
Paul CRAIG 11

1. Competence: The 'Allure of the Simple' and the 'Complexity of Reality'... 11
2. Competence and Member State Autonomy: Four Factors in Temporal
Perspective 12
2.1. From Rome to the SEA..... 12
2.2. From the SEA to the Treaty on European Union 16
2.3. From Maastricht to Nice 18
2.4. Post Nice..... 21
2.5. Conclusion..... 25
3. Member State Autonomy: Choice, Consequences and Legitimacy..... 25
3.1. The Logic of Collective Action..... 26
3.2. Output Legitimacy: Peace and Prosperity..... 26
3.3. Output Legitimacy: Externalities 27
3.4. Output Legitimacy: 'Tension' and 'Resolution' 28
3.5. Output Legitimacy: Questioning the Premise..... 29
3.6. Output Legitimacy: the Balance between the Economic
and the Social 30

3.7. Input Legitimacy: the Rationales for the Shift	31
4. Conclusion	34

The European Court of Justice’s Approach to Primacy and European Constitutionalism – Preserving the European Constitutional Order?

Fabian AMTENBRINK	35
1. Introductory Remarks	35
2. European Constitutionalism	38
2.1. Terminology	39
2.2. The National and European (Constitutional) Legal Orders: Companions in Fate	42
3. The ECJ’s Principled Approach to Primacy: a Claim of Absolute Sovereignty in Disguise?	52
3.1. On the ECJ’s Concept of Primacy	53
3.2. Recognizing Member State’s Common (Constitutional) Legal Traditions	56
3.3. Recognition of National (Constitutional) Legal Standards	60
4. Concluding Remarks	62

The Judge’s Role in European Integration – The Court of Justice and Its Critics

Jürgen BASEDOW	65
1. Challenges to the Legality of the European Court’s Practice	65
2. Centrifugal Forces and the Functions of the Court	66
2.1. The Legal Framework	66
2.2. Centrifugal Forces in the Member States	67
2.3. Three Functions of the Court of Justice	69
3. The Review Function	70
3.1. Infringement Proceedings against Member States	70
3.2. Legal Doctrines Furthering the Review Function	71
4. The Impulse Function	72
4.1. The Synchrony of Political and Legal Action	72
4.2. Example 1: Admission of Foreign Students to Austrian Universities .	73
4.3. Example 2: Opening National Insurance Markets	73
4.4. Example 3: Free Movement for Companies	74
4.5. Summary: Legal Contributions to the Community’s Mission	75
5. The Uniformity Function	76
5.1. The Court Confronted with a Growing Body of Fragmentary Legislation	76
5.2. Underperformance	76
5.3. Overperformance	78

5.4. The Court’s Insecurity 78
 6. Conclusion 79

PART III.

INTERNAL MARKET, CITIZENSHIP AND MIGRATION

How Proportionate is the Proportionality Principle? Some critical remarks on the use and methodology of the proportionality principle in the internal market case law of the ECJ

Norbert REICH 83

1. From Admiration to Frustration?..... 83
 2. Widening the Scope of Application of the Fundamental Freedoms
 Beyond Market Access – How Wide? 85
 2.1. Beyond Market Access 86
 2.2. No “Reserved” or “Exempted” Areas 90
 2.3. A Broad and at the Same Time a Narrow Reading of “Public
 Interest” Justifications. 91
 3. The Proportionality Principle as the “Super-Norm”? 94
 3.1. Some Preliminary Methodological Reflections..... 94
 3.2. The Origin in the Early Case Law of the ECJ 95
 3.3. Possible Methodological Sophistication or Aberration? The
 Different and Sometimes Incoherent Tests of the ECJ..... 97
 3.3.1. Examples for the “autonomous balancing” approach..... 98
 3.3.2. Examples for the “state margin of appreciation” approach... 100
 3.3.3. Examples for the – rather ambivalent – “fundamental
 rights approach” 103
 3.3.4. Examples for the “quasi-legislative approach” 105
 4. Where Are We Now – A Plea for Judicial Restraint..... 108

Judicial Activism or Constitutional Interaction? Policymaking by the ECJ in the Field of Union Citizenship

Michael DOUGAN..... 113

1. Introduction 113
 2. Some Preliminary Remarks on “Judicial Activism” 114
 3. A Critical Reading of the Citizenship Case Law from 1998–2008..... 122
 4. Developments in the Citizenship Case Law since 2008 131
 5. A More Constructive Reading of the Citizenship Case Law? 139

6. Concluding Remarks 146

“Reserved Areas” of the Member States and the ECJ: the Case of Higher Education

Dragana DAMJANOVIC 149

1. Introduction 149

1.1. Article 165 TFEU (ex Article 149 ECT): Education as a “Reserved Area” of the Member States and the Bologna Process 149

1.2. The ‘Implied Powers Doctrine’ as the Basis of EU Legal Integration within Higher Education 152

1.3. Aim of This Paper 153

2. The Various Strands of ECJ Case Law in Higher Education 153

2.1. Professional Recognition 153

2.2. Student Mobility: Cross-Border Access to Higher Education Courses 155

2.2.1. The issue of student mobility within the triangle of EU case law, EU hard law and European soft law (in particular, the Bologna process) 155

2.2.2. The Austria *v* Commission and Belgium *v* Commission ‘student mobility’ cases 157

2.2.3. Criticism against the Court 158

2.2.4. Reaction to the Court’s judgments: a quota regulation system for medical studies 163

2.2.5. The Bressol judgment 163

2.2.6. Conclusion 166

2.3. Student Mobility: Cross-Border Access to Financial Support for Education 166

2.4. Building the EU Internal Market Based on Free Competition for Higher Education 169

3. Conclusion 171

References 172

The European Court of Justice, Member State Autonomy and European Union Citizenship: Conjunctions and Disjunctions

Dora KOSTAKOPOULOU 175

1. Introduction 175

2. European Union Citizenship as an Experimental Institution 177

2.1. EU Citizenship as a Fundamental Status 180

2.2. Family Reunification 186

2.3. Non-Discriminatory Restrictions 190

2.4. Increased Protection of Union Citizens in the Member State of Residence	192
3. EU Citizenship and Member State Nationality: Rethinking the Link? ...	195
4. Conclusion	202

PART IV.
FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

The Case of Fundamental Rights: a State of Ambivalence

Loïc AZOULAI	207
--------------------	-----

1. Introduction. The Question has Changed	207
2. Playing with the Scope of the Protection: the Liberty of the State	208
3. Designing the Constraints: the Independence of the State	211
4. Conceptualising the Rights: the Identity of the State	214
5. Conclusion	217

Fundamental Rights Jurisprudence Between Member States' Prerogatives and Citizens' Autonomy

Dagmar SCHIEK	219
---------------------	-----

1. Introduction	219
2. The Notion of Fundamental Rights – Autonomy of Human Beings	220
3. The Multi-Layered Context of Fundamental Rights in the European Union	222
3.1. Protecting Fundamental Rights Alongside Economic Integration ..	223
3.2. Functions of the Court's Fundamental Rights Protection	225
3.3. Multi-Polar Dilemmas Underlying the Court's Fundamental Rights Case Law	227
4. Recent ECJ Case Law Between EU, Citizens and Member States	228
4.1. A Quantitative Appetizer	228
4.2. Substantive Assessment of Some Neuralgic Fields	229
4.2.1. Assumptions and adequate fields	229
4.2.2. Non-discrimination and equality	231
4.2.3. Collective labour rights between fundamental freedoms and fundamental rights	236
5. Conclusion	242
Annex: List of Cases Evaluated	244

A Pluralistic Europe of Rights

Marta CARTABIA	259
----------------------	-----

1. Introduction	259
-----------------------	-----

2. The New Millennium and the Flourishing of a ‘Europe of Rights’.....	262
2.1. The <i>Tanja Kreil</i> Case	263
2.2. The <i>Schmidberger</i> and <i>Omega</i> Cases.....	264
2.3. <i>K.B., Richards</i> and <i>Tadao Maruko</i> Cases.....	265
2.4. Cases on Terrorism	268
2.5. A Panoramic Overview	269
3. ... and of a ‘European Court of Rights’	270
4. ‘United in Diversity’ at Risk.....	272
5. Looking for an Antidote	275

PART V.

PROCEDURAL AUTONOMY OF THE STATES

The “Procedural Autonomy” of Member States and the Constraints
Stemming from the ECJ’s Case Law: Is Judicial Activism Still Necessary?

Adelina ADINOLFI	281
------------------------	-----

1. Introduction	281
2. The Constraints on “Procedural Autonomy” of the Member States: the extent of the discretionary power of the Court in the assessment of the adequacy of national procedures.....	284
3. The Critical Reactions Caused by the Judicial Limitation of “Procedural Autonomy” of Member States	286
4. Why Limit the “Procedural Autonomy” of Member States?	291
4.1. Supremacy of EU law	291
4.2. Uniform Application of EU law	294
4.3. The Fundamental Right to Obtain Judicial Protection	296
5. A Tentative Paradigm to Explain the Court’s Unsteady Approach in Assessing Adequacy of National Procedural Law	299
6. Conclusion	302

Why There is No Principle of “Procedural Autonomy” of
the Member States

Michal BOBEK.....	305
-------------------	-----

1. Introduction	305
2. The Orthodoxy.....	305
3. The Cases.....	307
4. The Theories	309
5. The Requirements	312
5.1. Equivalence	312
5.2. Effectiveness	316
5.3. Their Relationship	317

6. The Misunderstanding	319
7. Conclusion	322

National Voice and European Loyalty. Member State Autonomy,
European Remedies and Constitutional Pluralism in EU Law

Daniel SARMIENTO	325
------------------------	-----

1. Exit, Voice, Loyalty and the Legitimacy of the European Court of Justice.....	326
2. Member State Voice	327
2.1. Judicial Review of National Legislation.....	327
2.2. Judicial Review of National Judicial Action	330
2.3. Judicial Review of the Pouvoir Constituant	336
2.4. Constitutional Voice and Non-Constitutional Claims	338
3. Individual Voice	339
4. Autonomy through Pluralism	342

PART VI.

CONCLUDING REMARKS – THE RIGHT’S DIMENSION

The ECJ Between the Individual Citizen and the Member States – A Plea
for a Judge-Made European Law on Remedies

Hans-W. MICKLITZ	349
------------------------	-----

1. The ECJ Between the Individual Citizen and the Autonomy of the Member States	349
2. RRP in a ‘New’ European Legal Order Having Its ‘Own’ Legal System... ..	351
2.1. The EU Legal Order Autonomous and/or Integrated.	352
2.2. Three European Legal Orders – Economic, Social and Citizen?.....	356
2.3. A Rights Based Order – Economic, Fundamental, Social, Human, Citizen Rights	360
3. RRP – First, Second, Third ... How Many Generations?	364
3.1. The Ambiguities of the Concept of Conferred or Attributed Competences.....	364
3.2. A Shaky Consensus – The Competence Divide in RRP.....	366
3.3. Beyond Consensus – The Horizontal Implications of RRP	369
4. The Institutional Framework of Judge-Made European Law on Remedies	373
4.1. The Parameters: Judicial Co-operation, Organised Law Enforcement and Legitimacy in RRP	374
4.2. Is the Concept of Subjective Rights a Procrustean Bed?	376
4.2.1. Prevalence of EU economic rights over social rights	377
4.2.2. The missing EU collective rights	380

4.3. Competence (Constitutional) Boundaries in the Development of an EU Law on Remedies	383
4.3.1. The impact of the distinction between primary vs. secondary EU law on RRP	385
4.3.2. The line between constitutional and non-constitutional RRP	388
5. Thoughts on the Future for the EU Law on Remedies <i>De Lege Lata</i>	392
5.1. Constitutional Implications: a Right to Access in the Preliminary Reference Procedure	393
5.2. Substantive Implications: RRP to Counterbalance the European Economic Order	395
5.2.1. From uniform application to uniform enforcement	395
5.2.2. The principle of effectiveness and the doctrine of economic efficiency	397
5.2.3. Materialising the principle of equivalence	399
<i>Index</i>	401