

EFFECTIVE JUDICIAL PROTECTION IN CONSUMER LITIGATION

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Article 47 of the EU Charter in Practice

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FOREWORD

Justice for Both was the title of Anna van Duin's PhD thesis, which formed the basis for this monograph. Remindful of Eleanor Roosevelt's words, which are cited at the end of the concluding chapter, Anna's study of effective judicial protection in contractual relations between consumers and businesses aims to do justice to both sides. Anna's book provides a first comprehensive study of the manner in which the right to an effective remedy before a court, as laid down in Article 47 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, affects the assessment of standard terms in consumer contracts. Based on a careful analysis of the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union within the framework of the Unfair Contract Terms Directive, in combination with the comparison of Spanish and Dutch law on the subject, this book presents an insightful taxonomy of the functions that Article 47 of the Charter does and can fulfil in private law adjudication in Europe.

It is an honour for me to introduce Anna's work to a broader audience. As a supervisor of her research, together with Dr Joasia Luzak (University of Exeter), it was a pleasure to witness the development of Anna's thoughts on the role and functions of Article 47 of the Charter in the realm of private law. Her PhD research at the University of Amsterdam formed part of my project 'Judges in Utopia', funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO Vidi 2014–2019). With a background of six years in legal practice and a keen interest in academic research, Anna was the ideal candidate for conducting a study encompassing both procedural and substantive aspects of effective protection of EU rights before national courts. Moreover, her fluency in Spanish allowed her to include an exploration of the national context of some of the most influential case law in the field, such as the well-known *Aziz* judgment. The comparison with Dutch law resulted in new insights into the national environments in which rights under EU law are sought to be effectuated. The outstanding nature of Anna's work was confirmed by the *cum laude* evaluation that she received at the occasion of her PhD defence on 23 October 2020 from a committee composed of experts in the field: Prof. Esther Arroyo Amayuelas (Professor of Civil Law at the University of Barcelona), Prof. Ruth de Bock (Advocate-General

at the Dutch Supreme Court and Professor of Civil Adjudication at the University of Amsterdam), Prof. Fabrizio Cafaggi (judge in the Italian Council of State and former Professor of Private and Comparative Law at the University of Trento and the European University Institute), Prof. Aukje van Hoek (Professor of Private International Law and Civil Procedure at the University of Amsterdam) and Prof. Marco Loos (Professor of Private Law, in particular of European Consumer Law at the University of Amsterdam). After her PhD defence, Anna continued her academic path as an assistant professor at the Amsterdam Law School and she is currently working on questions of digitalisation and access to justice. The publication of her book with Intersentia, thus, concludes a time of in-depth study of the specific influence of Article 47 of the Charter in EU consumer law and opens up new avenues for research and exchange with legal scholars as well as practitioners.

A remarkable aspect of the book that you are about to start reading concerns its consideration of both theoretical and practical dimensions of judicial protection in consumer cases. Anna's research addresses a 'civil justice gap' in the protection of consumers against unfair contract terms imposed by professional parties, such as the Spanish mortgage cases. While the analysis is embedded in a thoughtful elaboration of Article 47's scope and normative content, it also makes visible the real-life problems that give rise to case law under the Unfair Contract Terms Directive. Anna convincingly demonstrates that Article 47 of the Charter, as an EU fundamental right, may contribute to establishing a more equal legal position for weaker parties, such as homeowners like Mr Aziz, in relation to stronger parties, such as banks. Insofar as Article 47, thus, adds procedural safeguards, it provides courts with a basis for granting and developing substantive remedies.

Anna concludes the book with the image of Article 47 of the Charter as a 'chameleon-like provision with many colours': depending on the context and interpretation by national courts, Article 47 can offer judges a basis for new remedies to redress the balance of parties' interests under the Unfair Contract Terms Directive. It does not impose solutions from above, but allows space for litigants and judges to define effective protection from below, within the dynamics of national private law, civil procedure and EU law. Similarly, Anna's reflections on the functions of Article 47 in European private law adjudication inspire the academic debate on the manner in which fundamental rights can contribute to procedural and substantive protection in private legal cases. At the same time, her work may provide judges with a framework that offers guidance for the application of EU law

in national private legal contexts. Anna's ability to speak to both theorists and practitioners is just one of the many reasons that make this book an important read for anyone working within the field of European private law: it may help bridge the civil justice gap in EU consumer contract law by inviting us to think about judicial protection in different colours.

Amsterdam, 1 October 2021

Chantal Mak

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At a crucial stage in my research I found myself surrounded by welcoming colleagues at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra. At the UB Facultat de Dret I had the opportunity of discussing my research with, amongst others, Esther Arroyo, Rosa Barceló Comte, Mariló Gramunt Fombuena, Vicente Pérez Daudí and Jordi Nieva Fenoll. I have also had the pleasure of meeting and talking to José María Fernández Seijo, Sandra Lange, Herman van Harten, Roland de Moor and other judges during two transnational judicial training projects I have participated in.¹ As one of the judges has observed, exploring the possibilities of Article 47 as a common EU-tool was no superfluous luxury.

¹ ACTIONES, an EU-funded project under the coordination of the EUI Centre for Judicial Cooperation (see <https://cjc.eui.eu/projects/actions/>), and Re-Jus, coordinated by the University of Trento (see <https://www.rejus.eu/>).

On a more personal note, I want to thank Jesús García González and Sara Dávila Castillo for being the best Spanish teachers I could wish for. Jesús, your energy and love have enabled me to start and finish this project. *Gracias por tu paciencia, la única sciencia.* Annechien Vink, literary scholar and my mother, has always stimulated my imagination. In the end, it was Leen van Duin, emeritus professor of architecture and my father, who convinced me to wrap up the thesis and let it go. Many thanks to Jessica van der Meer for the language edits, and to Fien de Ruiter for drafting the CJEU case law register. My peer support group consisted of other dear friends and (former) colleagues as well; I cannot thank you enough for being by my side along the way.

Lastly, I want to thank Ann-Christin Maak-Scherpe and Rebecca Moffat at Intersentia for helping me publish this book. For me, it is a stepping stone to further research in the field of access to justice, civil procedure and fundamental rights from a European and comparative perspective. I look forward also to continuing my work on digital justice and online dispute resolution, together with my colleagues from the ‘Digital Transformation of Decision-Making’ team. To the readers of this book: please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to share your thoughts about these issues.

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