

EVENTS REVIEWS

MOSCOW 2012 CONFERENCE – A MAJOR TURNING POINT IN INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PROCEDURAL LAW HISTORY

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Our international association has now been in existence for 65 years, and has experienced a considerable number of changes in the course of its existence.

Established as a restricted and select club of the privileged few (Florence 1948), it initially led a somewhat low-key existence – just four symposia, with restricted access!

In 1976, I took the bold decision to open up this association to the world, and to invite procedural specialists from the entire globe to its first international conference, which took place in Ghent (August-September 1977, 300 participants from 45 countries), entitled 'Towards a Justice with a Human Face'.¹⁹⁶

There were participants from Kyoto, Montevideo, Warsaw, Sao Paulo, Thessaloniki, Uppsala, Budapest, Rome, London, etc. The conference languages were French, German, English and Spanish, which became the standard model for our international meetings and, in 2011, for our Review.

Since Ghent, international conferences enjoying world-wide prestige have been held every four year, viz. Würzburg (1983), Utrecht (1987), Coïmbra (1991), Taormina (1995), Vienna (1999), Mexico (2003), San Salvador de Bahia (2007), Heidelberg (2011).

The second major turning point was the symposium held in New Orleans (US) (1998). This enabled the Association to establish a firm base in North America. This development was subsequently confirmed by the Toronto (Canada) symposium, held in 2007. It is noteworthy that, even though both cities belong to two different

¹⁹⁶ M Storme and H Casman (eds), *Towards a Justice with a Human Face: The First International Congress on the Law of Civil Procedure* (Kluwer 1978).

judicial cultures, the Association nevertheless achieved its significant breakthrough in North America.

The third major turning point came with the conferences which were successively organised in Latin America, ie in Mexico and San Salvador. This ensured that we would continue to attract an enormous amount of interest. In fact, we had already aroused this interest by making Spanish a conference language as from the 1970s.

The fourth major turning point was undoubtedly our 2012 Moscow conference 'Civil Procedure in Cross-cultural Dialogue: Eurasia Context', which attracted more than 600 participants from 45 countries! Here, we presented ourselves as an attractive association for the massive world of judicial procedure in the former Soviet Union countries.

Up to this point, only a small number of Russian colleagues had attended our meetings – once in a while. However, the enormous effort put in by Dmitry Mareshin has achieved wonders in this respect. Thanks to the Moscow event we were assured of a definitive breakthrough in Eastern Europe.

It is true that, by this time, those taking part in our events had already featured a significant number of scholars from countries which fell within the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union, ie Poland, Hungary, Lithuania and Bulgaria.

However, the participation of Russia has meant that our association now hosts a system of court procedure that has its own distinctive features, which continue to differ from the Western model and thus contribute towards the rich diversity of procedural law.

This period also witnessed a number of significant developments which have impacted the world of procedural law.

In September 1980, I had the opportunity to witness, in Beijing, the re-opening of the Chinese Ministry of Justice. Three years later, at the Faculty of Law (Ghent University), I concluded the very first Legal Education Contract for the People's Republic of China with the Chinese Minister for Justice.

Ever since, the major law firms have definitely found their way to the People's Republic!

In 1987 (Milan) I made a plea for the creation of a European system of procedural law. We set up a working party and produced a preliminary draft, which landed in the European Commission's in-tray in 1993. It was only later that the need for such a system was appreciated – which led to the creation of the Max Planck Institute for International, European and Regulatory Procedural Law, located in Luxembourg, under the direction of Prof Burkhard Hess.

In 1992, an international conference took place in Tokyo. This was organised by the Japanese Procedural Law Association under the motto 'Procedural Law in the Era of Globalization'. At this point, it should be recalled that Japan has involved itself with our Association from the outset, which should cause no surprise in view of the German origins of the Japanese system of court procedure.

Thanks to the Moscow conference, Russia has become a particularly active player in the life of the IAPL. I would like to take the opportunity here to express my gratitude towards our Russian colleagues for this outcome, and to congratulate them on each project they intend to start in the future.

References

1. Storme M and Casman H (eds), *Towards a Justice with a Human Face: The First International Congress on the Law of Civil Procedure* (Kluwer 1978).

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