EUROPEAN FAMILY LAW SERIES

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Prof. Katharina Boele-Woelki (Utrecht)
Prof. Frederique Ferrand (Lyon)
Prof. Cristina Gonzalez Beilfuss (Barcelona)
Prof. Maarit Jantera-Jareborg (Uppsala)
Prof. Nigel Lowe (Cardiff)
Prof. Dieter Martiny (Frankfurt/Oder)
Prof. Walter Pintens (Leuven)
FAMILY LAW AND CULTURE
IN EUROPE

Developments, Challenges
and Opportunities

Edited by
Katharina Boele-Woelki
Nina Dethloff
Werner Gephart

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PREFACE

The fifth conference of the Commission on European Family Law (CEFL) on 'Family Law and Culture in Europe: Developments, Challenges and Opportunities' was held in Bonn in August 2013 in collaboration with the University of Bonn and the Käte Hamburger Center for Advanced Study in the Humanities ‘Law as Culture’, which aims to contribute to an understanding of the cultural dimension of law and the promotion of the research on law from the perspective of the humanities. The participation of more than 200 participants from around 33 countries made the conference a valuable experience and fostered a stimulating discussion during the three conference days.

The discussions were introduced by eminent conference speakers from all over Europe. Additionally, twelve young researchers from eight different countries were selected after a call for papers. They presented their research in four parallel working groups which addressed Cross-Border Family Relationships, Transnational Families, The (Un-)Wanted Child, and the Relationship Breakup. Their papers are also included in this volume.

The book consists of five parts. It starts with four presentations of the CEFL Principles on Property Relations between Spouses. Part 2 examines the breakup of (non-)formalized relationships with special reference to unmarried cohabitation and the current debate on its legislation. It also addresses alternative instruments of conflict resolution in family law like the Irish collaborative law approach. Part 3 analyses the interdependence between legal, social and biological parenthood. It also deals with the problems of cross-border surrogacy as well as mechanisms for the anonymous relinquishment of children and baby boxes. It ends with a contribution on legal issues concerning stepfamilies. Part 4 addresses the legal aspects on international family relationships and contains a critical view on the 2011 Proposal for a Regulation on jurisdiction, applicable law and the recognition and enforcement of decisions in matters of matrimonial property regimes. It also analyses the notion of ‘habitual residence’ in European family law and refers to the criteria of nationality and domicile as a connecting factor for private international law questions regarding same-sex relationships. Finally, Part 5 reveals interesting aspects of transnational families such as the EU citizenship. It also reports about recent research on the effects of the new Moroccan Family Code on Moroccan nationals living abroad. The last contribution on family sociology explores the question why and to what extent culture matters in family law either as a constraint or as a condition. Moreover, it
critically investigates the concept of European universalism which might bridge
the gap between different legal cultures as far as family law is concerned.

The conference organizers and editors of the book are very grateful to the
German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the Alexander von
Humboldt Foundation and the Käte Hamburger Center for Advanced Study in
the Humanities 'Law as Culture' who generously supported the conference.
Thanks are also due to the University of Bonn for making it possible for
international and comparative family lawyers in Europe and from abroad to
meet again in order to exchange ideas and to discuss new developments. Cordial
thanks are owed to Dr. Steffen Mehlich from the Alexander von Humboldt
Stiftung and Ramona Pisal, president of the German Women Lawyers
Association, who both addressed the participants during the conference. Finally,
without the valuable support of the staff of both the Institute for German,
European and International Family Law and the Käte Hamburger Center for the
Advanced Study in the Humanities 'Law as Culture', the conference could not
have taken place. Many thanks for all their dedication and enthusiasm!

Katharina Boele-Woelki, Nina Dethloff and Werner Gephart
Bonn and Utrecht, April 2014
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LIST OF AUTHORS

Professor Anne Barlow
Professor of Family Law and Policy, University of Exeter

Professor Katharina Boele-Woelki
Professor for Private International Law and Comparative Law, University of Utrecht, Utrecht Centre for European Research into Family Law (UCERF); Chair of the Commission on European Family Law

Professor Andrea Bonomi
Professor for Comparative Law and Private International Law at the Faculty of Law and Criminal Justice, University of Lausanne; Center of Comparative, European and International Law (CDCEI)

Professor Gabriele Britz
Justice at the German Federal Constitutional Court; Professor for German Public Law and European Law, University of Gießen

Professor Christine Budzikiewicz
Professor of Civil Law and Private International Law, University of Marburg

Angela d’Angelo
Post-doctoral Researcher at the Sant’Anna School of Advanced Studies of Pisa

Stuart Davis
Solicitor; PhD Candidate at the University of Reading

Professor Nina Dethloff
Professor for Civil Law, Comparative Law, Private International Law and European Private Law, University of Bonn, Institute for German, European and International Family Law; Vice Director of the Käte Hamburger Center for Advanced Study in the Humanities ’Law as Culture’

Dr Eva de Götzen
Teaching Assistant at the University of Milan

Intersentia
List of Authors

Dr Martin Engel
Post-doctoral Researcher and Assistant Lecturer at the Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich

Dr Claire Fenton-Glynn
College Teaching Officer at Lucy Cavendish College, University of Cambridge

Professor Frédérique Ferrand
Professor at the Institute of Comparative Law Edouard Lambert, University Jean Moulin 3, Lyon

Professor Marie-Claire Foblets
Director of the Department of Law and Anthropology, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale; Professor of Law, University of Louvain

Professor Werner Gephart
Professor for Sociology at the Institute for Political Science and Sociology, University of Bonn; Director of the Käte Hamburger Center for Advanced Study in the Humanities ‘Law as Culture’

Connie Healy
PhD Candidate at the National University of Ireland

Dr Katharina Hilbig-Lugani
Post-doctoral Researcher and Assistant Lecturer at the University of Göttingen

Katharina Kaesling
PhD Candidate and Academic Assistant at the University of Bonn

Professor Nigel Lowe
Professor of Law, Cardiff Law School

Professor emeritus Dieter Martiny
Professor Emeritus, Europe-University Viadrina in Frankfurt/Oder; Guest Researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Comparative and International Private Law, Hamburg

Françoise Monéger
Former Justice at the French Cour de Cassation

Marketa Rihova Batista
PhD Candidate at the Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich
List of Authors

Professor Anna Singer
Professor of Private Law, Uppsala University

Professor Tone Sverdrup
Professor at the Institute for Private Law, University of Oslo

Dr Jinske Verhellen
Post-doctoral Assistant at the University of Ghent

Kajsa Walleng
PhD Candidate at Uppsala University

Geoffrey Willems
PhD Candidate and Teaching Assistant at the Catholic University of Louvain