

## An Introduction to Covid-19 and Civil Justice: Unforeseen, Unexpected and on Short Notice

Bart Krans, Full Professor Civil law and Civil procedure law, Leiden University; email: [h.b.krans@law.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:h.b.krans@law.leidenuniv.nl) and

Anna Nylund, Professor, Faculty of Law, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, email: [anna.nylund@uit.no](mailto:anna.nylund@uit.no)

The landscape of civil justice has changed rapidly in very short time. The Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has an impact on civil cases on a global scale that could be characterised as unprecedented. Numerous countries across the globe are facing the question how to enable courts to cope with civil cases in these strange times. Do courts proceed as usual? If not, which cases are dealt with, and how? And perhaps: will the current situation teach us something for the post-pandemic period (which we are all hoping for)?

The impact of the virus is not the same in every country, nor is the way in which governments respond to the situation identical. The consequences for the civil judiciary are varying, not only between countries, but also over time. What seems appropriate today may be considered outdated next week, depending on, what one can call, the societal impact of this virus and current status of the fight against it.

We have asked colleagues from several countries to give a short overview of the consequences of the pandemic for civil cases. We deliberately did not provide our colleagues with a table of questions or a specific list of topics to be covered. We asked our colleagues to write a very short piece about what they have seen or see in their countries on the consequences of Covid-19 for the judiciary. We added that they could go into every possible topic that they deem interesting for people in other countries.

Needless to say, we are truly grateful that so many colleagues almost immediately answered in the affirmative and provided us with a text concerning their country. International collaboration on legal issues on such a short notice is not given, especially when one keeps in mind that the sudden switch to online teaching at many universities, which is relevant for at least some of the authors of this piece, does not mean that the time one has to spend on university teaching has decreased. So: we are thankful.<sup>1</sup>

The constantly changing societal situation these days underlines that the respective contributions hereafter is by definition a snapshot, per country fixed on certain point in time. Most of the contributions are finished in the first half of April 2020.<sup>2</sup> It may very well

---

<sup>1</sup> To, in alphabetical order by country, David Bamford (Australia), Hermes Zaneti jr. (Brazil), Catherine Piché (Canada), Clement Salung Petersen (Denmark), John Sorabji (England), Laura Ervo (Finland), Frédérique Ferrand (France), Wolfgang Hau (Germany), Elisabetta Silvestri (Italy), Vigita Vėbraité (Lithuania), Piotr Rylski (Poland), Aleš Galič (Slovenia) and Jordi Nieva Fenoll (Spain). Each of these authors have written the text of their own country. This introduction and the final words are written by Bart Krans and Anna Nylund.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the respective contributions here-after mention a 'closing date'.

be that the situation has changed since submitting the chapters to us, or will do so on short notice.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> To prevent loss of time, the use of the English language in this contribution is not been checked by a native speaker.