

## **PEOPIL 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE**

by

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This year's annual PEOPIL conference was, as members have come to expect, packed with informative and thought provoking lectures and enjoyable social events. However, this year's conference also provided an opportunity to celebrate a very special anniversary – 10 years of PEOPIL! And what an organisation it has become! Little did the founding members know that 10 years on it would have so much influence on issues relevant to cross border litigation. Long may it continue!

The location for this year's conference was the beautiful historic city of Prague, and the majestic Prague Marriott Hotel. The conference opened with a welcome reception at the residence of the Mayor of Prague where the delegates were made to feel very welcome by the Deputy President of the Czech Bar Association, JUDr Martin Vychopen, and the Magistrate responsible for the Health Department in the city of Prague, Magr Milan Besak. The informal drinks reception, kindly sponsored by the Czech Bar Association, gave the delegates the opportunity to catch up with each other before the conference in impressive surroundings.

The first day of the conference was opened by our President, John Pickering. The President of the Czech Bar, Dr Vladimir Jirousek, and Dr Jaromir Jirsa, the President of the Czech Union of Judges, welcomed us to Prague and gave us an inciteful view as to the current developments in personal injury litigation in the Czech Republic. There were then two very useful lectures, delivered by Professor Martin Casals and Tom Sorum, as to how EU Nationals could enforce the implementation of EU legislation, which was of great interest given that we will all be aware of situations where our countries have failed to implement EU law either at all or, alternatively, in the way in which the European Parliament intended.

The EU Motor Insurance Directives were the focus for the next session of the morning, with lectures from Robert Mulac of the European Commission, Alain Pire of the Belgian Bureau of the Belgian Guarantee Fund and Dr Michael Burman, President of the Bar Association Thuringia, Germany giving the perspective of the European Commission, Insurers and Claimants respectively. Dr Janeen Carruthers of the University of Glasgow then helped us through the provisions of Rome II giving us some practical ideas as to how it might be applied. Diana Wallis MEP, the European Parliament Rapporteur for Rome II, gave us further assistance in this regard in her lecture later the same day, and also updated us as to the progress of the limitation proposals which PEOPIL had been instrumental in compiling.

The afternoon session began with Dr Jakub Hradec providing more detailed information as to how the Czech Republic deals with personal injury claims,

and Michael Nissen of the ADAC then gave a very useful lecture as to how Hungary, Poland and Slovenia deal with road traffic accident claims.

During the course of the first day a special presentation was made to PEOPIIL members who are well known to us all, Clive Garner, Philip Mead and Marco Bona. They were presented with awards for their outstanding contributions to PEOPIIL. Delegates showed their appreciation for the work that these three members have done with resounding applause.

After a very packed day the delegates were all keen to enjoy themselves at the Gala Dinner which did not disappoint. The food was excellent, the wine was free flowing and the dance floor was crammed when the brilliant band took to the stage. The Gala Dinner also gave us the opportunity to thank Marie Cilinkova for ensuring that we were made so welcome in her country and for her assistance in arranging the conference, and also to make a presentation to Sheila Hall, PEOPIIL's Membership Manager, as it was her birthday!

The next morning delegates with sore heads attended a session on travel and tourism, chaired by Clive Garner. The session began with lectures by Katherine Deal and Andrew Young who looked back over the 17 years since the Package Travel Directive identifying the issues that had been dealt with by the courts during that period. Marc McDonald of the Dublin Institute of Technology then gave us all pause for thought by taking us through a consideration of questions in relation to interpretation of the Directive that remain to be clarified, particularly in relation to liability under the Directive. Lectures on Medical Tourism, a current hot topic given the numbers of people that travel to other European countries particularly for plastic surgery, and an interesting lecture about the work of the European Court of First Instance delivered by Judge Irena Pelikanova of the ECJ brought the conference to a close.

The legal community in Prague was rightly proud of hosting such a special conference. Such was the interest in PEOPIIL that John Pickering, Marie Cilinkova, Carl Jerstad and Ivo Greiter all had their 5 minutes of fame when they were interviewed live on Czech television, giving them the opportunity to introduce PEOPIIL to the whole country!

Thanks to the excellent organisational skills of Julie Pickering and Wolfgang Resch the conference provided just the right mix of lectures, debate and social events and was all the more enjoyable for the fact that we were celebrating the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. All too quickly it was over. However all of the delegates went away full of new information and ideas and great memories of a conference in a wonderful city.