TITU MAIORESCU UNIVERSITY DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF LAW

ABSTRACT DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

THE APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF MUTUAL RECOGNITION
TO JUDICIAL DECISIONS IN CRIMINAL MATTERS IMPOSING
SANCTIONS OR CUSTODIAL MEASURES FOR THE PURPOSE OF THEIR
ENFORCEMENT WITHIN THE EUROPEAN UNION – A MECHANISM OF
INTERNATIONAL JUDICIAL COOPERATION IN CRIMINAL LAW

| INTERNATIONAL JUDICIAL COOPERATION IN CRIMIN |
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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Identification of the addressed issue. Objectives of the thesis

This doctoral thesis addresses a topic of great value within the framework of judicial cooperation in criminal matters at the European Union level, as the recognition of foreign criminal judgments by the Romanian state, a relevant subject in the current context, generates significant effects on the functioning of international criminal justice and on the safeguarding of the fundamental rights of the convicted persons involved in the procedure.

Therefore, a correct application of the principle under analysis is a fundamental aspect for strengthening cooperation between the member states.

It can be observed that the principle of mutual recognition, adopted by the member states, plays a crucial role in accelerating judicial processes by reducing bureaucracy and excessive formal requirements, while simultaneously facilitating the uniform application of criminal sanctions.

However, the implementation of this principle requires a high level of mutual trust between the member states¹, within the context of harmonizing specific national norms, in a strictly regulated legislative framework².

The Lisbon Treaty³ enshrines the principle of mutual recognition as a central pillar of European judicial cooperation⁴, emphasizing the importance of integration in the field of criminal justice and the need to identify a balance between the efficiency of procedures and the

¹ A. Ryan, *Towards a System of European Criminal Justice. The problem of admissibility of evidence*, 1st edn. Routledge, 2014, p. 32

² F. Cheneval, S. Lavenex and F. Schimmelfennig, *European Democracy as Demoi-cracy*, 1st edn. Routledge, 2015, p. 124

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T. Rafaraci, The application of the principle of mutual recognition to decisions on supervision measures as an alternative to provisional detention in S. Ruggeri and H. von Arndt Sinn, Schriften des Zentrums für Europäische und Internationale Strafrechtsstudien (Publicații ale Centrului de Studii de Drept Penal European și Internațional), 1st edn. V&R unipress, 2012, p. 78

protection of the fundamental rights of the parties involved⁵. This is because its application must be complementary to the respect for the fundamental guarantees of criminal law in its entirety.

Despite its remarkable importance, the application of the principle of mutual recognition faces significant challenges, and national legislations are not always clear or efficient. As a result, normative ambiguities, legislative gaps, and contradictory interpretations of certain provisions regarding the recognition of foreign criminal judgments undermine the uniform implementation of this principle, eroding mutual trust between states and, implicitly, the effectiveness of the European criminal justice system.

The main purpose of this thesis is the detailed analysis of the recognition of foreign criminal judgments rendered by the authorities of the European Union member states, focusing on the shortcomings of national regulations and their impact on cross-border judicial cooperation.

Additionally, the thesis explores solutions for optimizing national legislative techniques to ensure a clearer and more effective application of the rules regarding the recognition of foreign criminal judgments rendered by the judicial authorities of other member states. In this regard, the thesis proposes concrete solutions for improving domestic regulations and aligning them with European standards, including, by way of example: clarifying certain legislative provisions, implementing transparent and efficient procedures for the recognition of foreign judgments, and redefining the jurisdiction of national courts in this matter, using Norway's experience as a model.

In addition, the thesis emphasizes the need for closer cooperation between national and European judicial authorities to ensure the respect for fundamental principles of law and the effective protection of the rights of convicted persons.

In conclusion, this scientific endeavor aims to contribute to the development of a more efficient and coherent approach to the recognition of foreign criminal judgments in Romania, taking into account both the European legal framework and the specific challenges posed by national legislation.

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⁵ I. Bantekas and S. Nash, *International Criminal Law*, 3rd edn. Routledge-Cavendish, 2007

1.2. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

This work represents a comprehensive academic endeavor, built on the basis of extensive research, which addresses, in a rigorous and innovative manner, the field of international judicial cooperation in criminal matters, with theoretical, practical, and methodological relevance. The established objectives were designed to integrate conceptual analysis, practical applicability, and the formulation of legislative solutions, all supported by a well-founded methodological framework.

Thus, with regard to the <u>theoretical interest of the research</u>, we believe that this work makes an innovative and significant contribution to the specialized literature, offering a multidisciplinary approach to international judicial cooperation in criminal matters, with a particular emphasis on the principle of mutual recognition of criminal judgments imposing penalties or custodial measures for their enforcement within the European Union.

The work provides an in-depth theoretical analysis of the current legal framework and identifies the necessary directions for optimizing the specific national legislation. A central aspect of the research is the balance between state sovereignty and the need to ensure an effective criminal justice system, based on the respect for fundamental human rights.

At the same time, the work highlights the importance of legislative technique, essential in the development and application of legal norms, proposing innovative solutions for improving the current legislation in the addressed field.

<u>The practical component of the research</u> was designed to provide relevant tools applicable to practitioners in the field of law, with a particular emphasis on identifying and addressing certain legislative deficiencies/gaps in the field of international judicial cooperation in criminal matters.

Thus, with regard to the practical dimension of the work, the main objective was to highlight and analyze the challenges associated with the mutual recognition of criminal judgments rendered by other member states and to propose concrete and feasible solutions for strengthening the legal framework and judicial practice in the relevant field.

Therefore, the work represents a valuable and useful tool for legal professionals, supporting the efficiency and coherence of cross-border justice.

This research concludes with a <u>legislative proposal</u> aimed at addressing certain deficiencies identified within the study, contributing to the improvement of national legislation concerning international judicial cooperation in criminal matters, by enhancing the efficiency and clarity of the application of the specific rules analyzed.

An essential aspect of the proposal is the modification of the jurisdiction of the courts handling requests for the recognition of foreign criminal judgments, given that these requests typically involve a formal review and do not require a substantive examination.

We believe that the thesis makes a significant contribution to clarifying the fundamental principles of international judicial cooperation and proposes practical solutions for their uniform implementation.

Also, we believe that the research results highlight the necessity of an efficient criminal justice system, in line with international standards, and of coherent judicial cooperation in criminal matters.

1.3. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The importance and complexity of international judicial cooperation in criminal matters are highlighted by the analysis of this field, in the context of the expansion of global crime and the need for effective collaboration between states.

Thus, in the face of increasing transnational crime, national authorities are confronted with major challenges, and cooperation among them becomes an essential tool for combating criminal phenomena at the global level. Therefore, coordination, collaboration, and the exchange of information between states are imperative as fundamental elements for an effective and firm response by authorities against transnational crime, with the recognition and enforcement of foreign judicial decisions serving as a cornerstone of international cooperation.

The thesis is structured into five chapters, each addressing key aspects of the investigated topic.

<u>Chapter I</u> serves as an introduction to the research field, aiming to identify the essential reasons that underpinned the choice of this topic, as well as placing the phenomenon of transnational crime in the current context.

The analysis focuses on the process of recognizing foreign criminal judgments rendered by other European Union member states, highlighting the deficiencies of the national legal system and their impact on the effectiveness of cross-border judicial cooperation.

At the same time, the essential role of implementing the principle of mutual recognition is emphasized, particularly in the case of penalties and custodial measures, as a key factor in strengthening cooperation between member states.

Furthermore, this chapter includes the methodology used in the research and summarizes the results obtained, which will form the basis for the detailed analysis in the following chapters.

<u>Chapter II</u> focuses on the importance of international judicial cooperation in criminal matters, with an emphasis on differentiating between formal and informal forms of cooperation. Within this chapter, the role of each form of collaboration between states is analyzed, highlighting their interdependence with the respect for fundamental human rights.

The challenges encountered in the implementation of these mechanisms are also discussed, such as the difficulties arising from incompatibilities between national legislations and the diversity of procedures.

The chapter also explores the development directions of international judicial cooperation, considering emerging trends in the field of international criminal justice.

<u>Chapter III</u> focuses on the fundamental principles of international judicial cooperation within the European Union, providing a detailed analysis of the rules governing the interaction between member states. Although the chapter does not aim to be exhaustive, it thoroughly examines the principles regulating the enforcement of criminal judgments issued by the judicial authorities of other member states, highlighting the importance of a coherent legal framework to ensure effective cross-border judicial cooperation.

<u>Chapter IV</u> analyzes the application of the principle of mutual recognition in the case of foreign judicial decisions imposing penalties or custodial measures, for their enforcement within the territory of the European Union. It examines the scope of application of this principle, the jurisdiction of the judicial authorities involved, and the specific legal regulations.

An essential element of the chapter is the use of comparative law to assess the procedure for the transfer of convicted persons to the Kingdom of Norway (a third country, but one that maintains close ties with the European Union) for the continuation of sentence enforcement. This comparative analysis allows for the formulation of legislative reform proposals aimed at harmonizing national legislation with European regulations.

<u>Chapter V</u>, the most extensive, analyzes the ways in which sentences imposed by the courts of European Union member states are enforced on the territory of Romania. It addresses relevant legal procedures, legislative techniques, and existing regulations, providing a detailed analysis of how such instruments are implemented in domestic law.

A central point of the chapter is the critique of certain aspects of legislative technique, such as the positioning of specific provisions within Law No. 302/2004 on international judicial cooperation, which creates difficulties in the applicability and coherence of the regulations.

In addition, two important procedures are analyzed in detail: the recognition of judgments for the transfer of convicted persons to a prison in Romania and the resolution of cases where convicted individuals are already on the territory of Romania.

The thesis concludes with sections on conclusions and <u>a legislative proposal</u>, which specifically includes a concrete proposal for legislative reform aimed at improving national regulations concerning international judicial cooperation in criminal matters. The primary objective of this reform is to better integrate European norms in the field of international judicial cooperation.

We believe that the thesis provides a comprehensive and rigorous analysis of international judicial cooperation mechanisms, emphasizing the importance of a harmonized legal framework capable of contributing to the fight against cross-border crime and strengthening an effective and well-coordinated criminal justice system among states.

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