The first Conference of the Societa' Italiana per la Ricerca nel diritto Comparato (SIRD) on ‘The New Frontiers of Comparative Law’ was held at the Universita' Statale di Milano on the 5th, 6th, and 7th days of May 2011, under the auspices of the Accademia dei Lincei. The purpose of the conference was to single out and to discuss promising themes for research in the field of comparative law by Italian scholars.

SIRD is the acronym of the Societa' Italiana per la Ricerca nel Diritto Comparato (www.sirdcomp.it), the new scientific society established by a group of Italian comparative law scholars in September 2010. The purpose of the SIRD is to advance research in comparative law and to encourage exchanges among scholars working in the same field. According to its by-laws, SIRD promotes the diffusion of the Italian comparative research and the worldwide circulation of new ideas, by way of congresses, courses, translations of Italian and foreign works, grants, and support to its members.

Founded by several distinguished Italian scholars (among them, to cite a few, Rodolfo Sacco, Antonio Gambaro, Guido Alpa, Giovanni Conso, Michele Graziaidei, Alessandro Pizzorusso, and Gustavo Zagrebelsky), SIRD has recently been appointed as the National Committee of the International Association of Legal Science and now counts more than 200 active members.

Actually, ‘active’ is the right adjective to refer to the SIRD and to the spirit of its founders and its members.

The role of comparative law in Italian universities is remarkable: Italian universities are the home of around 200 chairs in comparative law, and the subject is compulsory in every law degree programme. Italian scholars have often been praised by the international academic community for their contributions to the development of comparative law studies and their inspiring research. We can mention in this respect the work done in the field of legal anthropology and the research carried out with respect to African, Chinese, Indian, and Far Eastern legal systems. The most recent developments in comparative law studies in Italy deal with the theoretical problems of legal translation, legal ontologies, and the use of cognitive sciences in comparative legal research.

This enthusiasm recently flowed into the SIRD, and its first congress, devoted to the ‘The New Frontiers of Comparative Law’, witnessed the renewal of this vibrant spirit.

As mentioned above, the aim of the conference was to convene Italian comparative law scholars to explore upcoming and promising fields of research. With this purpose in mind, the conference organizers presented a large selection of topics to the audience.

On the first day, Antonio Gambaro (University of Milano) addressed the methodological problems raised by recourse to quantitative methods and indicators to measure

* Research Fellow Comparative Private Law, Faculty of Law, University of Torino.
that laws and legal institutions achieve. Mario Serio (University of Palermo) unveiled the structure and the use of general categories in civil law and common law systems. Vittoria Barsotti (University of Florence) provided a lively picture of the interactions between Parliaments, Constitutional, and supranational courts.

The following day, Felice Casucci (University of Sannio) explored the pluralistic dimensions of European law. Gabriele Crespi Reghizzi (University of Pavia) brought the public to consider the many fascinating problems raised by comparisons involving the legal systems of the Far East and Africa. Michele Graziadei (University of Torino) reported vividly on the difficulties and achievements of the Italian scholars involved in the codification of European private law.

In the afternoon of the same day, Barbara Pozzo (University of Insubria) brilliantly discussed the past and the future of legal translation, and Raffaele Caterina (University of Torino) captured the attention of the audience with a learned account of the deepness of cryptotypes.

The last day of the conference covered themes ranging from the structure of religious legal systems to the place of comparative law in the area of public law. Roberto Mazzola (University of Piemonte orientale) presented his reflections on the relationship between soteriology and law by discussing religious systems of law. Claudio Sacchetto (University of Torino) surveyed the landscape of comparative fiscal law, its old pitfalls, and its new frontiers. Roberto Scarciglia (University of Trieste) made the case for the development of a cognitive approach to constitutional justice.

During each session, many interventions – both announced in the programme and from the floor – enriched the debate, offering a fuller picture of what comparative lawyers think about the themes discussed during the conference.

Undisputedly, the first Conference of the SIRD was an excellent occasion to exchange ideas and proposals among its participants. But, above all, it was an invaluable source of inspiration about new avenues in comparative law research. This initiative offered to all its participants the opportunity to discover and to deepen the knowledge of what comparative law research has achieved in several subject areas on themes representing the frontiers of the discipline.
List of Contributors

EWOUT HONDIUS
Professor of European Private Law
Molengraaff Institute for Private Law
Law Faculty, Utrecht University
Janskerkhof 12
3512 BL Utrecht
The Netherlands
Tel.: +31 (0) 31 253 7723
E-mail: e.h.hondius@uu.nl

JEAN-FRANÇOIS Gerkens
Professor of Roman Law and Comparative Private Law
Faculty of Law
University of Liège
Bât. B33, boîte 11
boulevard du Rectorat 3
4000 Liège 1
Belgium
Tel.: +32 4 366 3007
E-mail: jf.gerkens@ulg.ac.be

SÉVERINE SAINTIER
Senior Lecturer at the University of Sheffield (UK)
Western Bank
Sheffield S10 2TN
United Kingdom
Tel.: +44 (0)114 222 6864
Email: S.Saintier@sheffield.ac.uk

DAVE DE RUYSSCHER
Antwerp University
Vennuusstraat 23 (bureau S.V. 108)
B-2000 Antwerp
Belgium
Tel.: 0032 (0)3/2055720
E-mail: d.deruyss@vub.ac.be, Dave.
Deruysscher@ua.ac.be

JAN-JAAP KUIPERS
Assistant Professor European Law
Radboud University Nijmegen
P.O. Box 9049
6500 KK Nijmegen
The Netherlands
E-mail: j.kuipers@jur.ru.nl

MARIE-JOSÉ VAN DER HEIJDEN
Assistant Professor of Private Law,
Molengraaff Institute for Private Law,
Utrecht University
Janskerkhof 12
3512 BL Utrecht
The Netherlands
Tel.: +31 (0)30 253 7183
Fax: +31 (0)30 253 7203
E-mail: m.j.e.vanderheijden@uu.nl

ANNE KEIRSE
Professor of Private Law
Molengraaff Institute for Private Law,
Utrecht University
Janskerkhof 12
3512 BL Utrecht
The Netherlands
Tel.: +31 (0)30 253 7192
Fax: +31 (0)30 253 7203
E-mail: a.l.m.keirse@uu.nl

HÉCTOR SIMÓN-MORENO
Civil Law Assistant
University of Rovira i Virgili
Avda. Catalunya, 35
43002 Tarragona
Spain
E-mail: hector.simon@urv.cat

DEWI HAMWIJK
Legal Researcher
Centre for the Study of European Contract Law (CSECL)
University of Amsterdam
(sectie privatrecht A)
P.O. Box 1030
1000 BA Amsterdam
The Netherlands
E-mail: d.j.y.hamwijk@uva.nl

MACARENA SAEZ
Fellow International Legal Studies
American University Washington College of Law
4801 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
LARRY A. DIMATTEO
Hubert Hurst Professor of Contract Law & Legal Studies
Warrington College of Business Administration
University of Florida
Department of Management
PO Box 117165
237 STZ
Gainesville, Florida 32611-7165
United States of America
E-mail: larry.dimatteo@warrington.ufl.edu

NADIA COGGIOLA
Research Fellow Comparative Private Law
Faculty of Law
University of Torino
Biblioteca Ruffini
Corso San Maurizio 24
10124 Torino
Italy
E-mail: nadia.coggiola@unito.it

CHIARA PERFUMI
University of Brescia
Piazza del Mercato, 15
25122 Brescia
Italy
E-mail: perfumichiara@hotmail.com

JUDITH ROCHFELD
Professor of Private Law
University of Panthéon-Sorbonne (Paris I); Co-President of TEE
12 place du Panthéon
75231 Paris Cedex 5
France
E-mail: judith.rochfeld@univ-paris1.fr

BÉNÉDICTE FAUVARQUE-COSSON
Professor of Law
University of Panthéon-Assas (Paris II); Co-President of TEE; Vice-President of the European Law Institute
12 place du Panthéon,