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**SUMMATIVE (FORMAL) ASSESSMENT: MODULE 2B**

**THE EUROPEAN INSOLVENCY REGULATION**

This is the **summative (formal) assessment** for **Module 2B** of this course and is compulsory for all candidates who **selected this module as one of their compulsory modules from Module 2**. Please read instruction 6.1 on the next page very carefully.

If you selected this module as **one of your elective modules**, please read instruction 6.2 on the next page very carefully.

**The mark awarded for this assessment will determine your final mark for Module 2B**. In order to pass this module, you need to obtain a mark of 50% or more for this assessment.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION AND SUBMISSION OF ASSESSMENT**

**Please read the following instructions very carefully before submitting / uploading your assessment on the Foundation Certificate web pages.**

1. You must use this document for the answering of the assessment for this module. The answers to each question must be completed using this document with the answers populated under each question.

2. All assessments must be submitted electronically in MS Word format, using a standard A4 size page and a 11-point Arial font. This document has been set up with these parameters – **please do not change the document settings in any way. DO NOT** submit your assessment in PDF format as it will be returned to you unmarked.

3. No limit has been set for the length of your answers to the questions. However, please be guided by the mark allocation for each question. More often than not, one fact / statement will earn one mark (unless it is obvious from the question that this is not the case).

4. You must save this document using the following format: **[studentID.assessment2B]**. An example would be something along the following lines: 202223-336.assessment2B. **Please also include the filename as a footer to each page of the assessment** (this has been pre-populated for you, merely replace the word “studentID” with the student number allocated to you). Do not include your name or any other identifying words in your file name. **Assessments that do not comply with this instruction will be returned to candidates unmarked**.

5. Before you will be allowed to upload / submit your assessment via the portal on the Foundation Certificate web pages, you will be required to confirm / certify that you are the person who completed the assessment and that the work submitted is your own, original work. Please see the part of the Course Handbook that deals with plagiarism and dishonesty in the submission of assessments. **Please note that copying and pasting from the Guidance Text into your answer is prohibited and constitutes plagiarism. You must write the answers to the questions in your own words**.

6.1If you selected Module 2B as one of your **compulsory modules** (see the e-mail that was sent to you when your place on the course was confirmed), the final time and date for the submission of this assessment is **23:00 (11 pm) GMT on 1 March 2023**. The assessment submission portal will close at 23:00 (11 pm) GMT on 1 March 2023. No submissions can be made after the portal has closed and no further uploading of documents will be allowed, no matter the circumstances.

6.2 If you selected Module 2B as one of your **elective modules** (see the e-mail that was sent to you when your place on the course was confirmed), you have a **choice** as to when you may submit this assessment. You may either submit the assessment by **23:00 (11 pm) GMT on 1 March 2023 or by 23:00 (11 pm) BST (GMT +1) on 31 July 2023**. If you elect to submit by 1 March 2023, you **may not** submit the assessment again by 31 July 2023 (for example, in order to achieve a higher mark).

7. Prior to being populated with your answers, this assessment consists of **10 pages**.

**ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS**

**QUESTION 1 (multiple-choice questions) [10 marks in total]**

Questions 1.1. – 1.10. are multiple-choice questions designed to assess your ability to think critically about the subject. Please read each question carefully before reading the answer options. Be aware that some questions may seem to have more than one right answer, but you are to look for the one that makes the most sense and is the most correct. When you have a clear idea of the question, find your answer and mark your selection on the answer sheet by highlighting the relevant paragraph **in yellow**. Select only **ONE** answer. Candidates who select more than one answer will receive no mark for that specific question.

**Question 1.1**

The EIR 2000 was the first European initiative to ever attempt to harmonise the insolvency laws of EU Member States.

Select the correct answer from the options below:

1. True, before the EIR 2000, the EU has not sought to harmonise the insolvency laws of EU Member States.
2. False, there was another EU Regulation regulating insolvency law at EU level before the EIR 2000.
3. False, an EU Directive regulating insolvency law at EU level existed before the EIR 2000.
4. False, the EU sought to draft Conventions with a view to harmonising the insolvency laws of EU Member States as early as the 1960s, but these initiatives failed.

**Question 1.2**

According to Article 1(1) of the EIR 2015, proceedings fall within the scope of the EIR if:

1. they are based on laws relating to insolvency for the purpose of rescue, adjustment of debt, reorganisation, or liquidation; are public; are collective.
2. they are based on laws relating to insolvency for the purpose of liquidation; are public; are collective.
3. they are based on laws relating to insolvency for the purpose of rescue, adjustment of debt, reorganisation, or liquidation; are public.
4. they are based on laws relating to insolvency for the purpose of rescue, adjustment of debt, reorganisation, or liquidation; are collective.

**Question 1.3**

In 2017, the EIR Recast replaced the EIR 2000. Recasting the EIR 2000 was deemed necessary by various stakeholders. Why?

1. Through its case law, the CJEU had altered the literal meaning of several provisions of the EIR 2000. Newly formulated rules, in line with the CJEU interpretation, were therefore needed.
2. The EIR 2000 was generally regarded as a successful instrument in the area of European insolvency law by the EU institutions, practitioners and academics. However, a number of its shortcomings were identified by an evaluation study and a public consultation.
3. The fundamental choices and underlying policies of the EIR 2000 lacked support from the major stakeholders (businesses, public authorities, insolvency practitioners, etc.). A new Regulation was therefore needed to meet their expectations.
4. The EIR 2000 proved to be inefficient and incapable of promoting co-ordination of cross-border insolvency proceedings in the EU.

**Question 1.4**

Why can it be said that the EIR Recast did not overhaul the *status quo*?

1. The EIR Recast is a copy of the EIR 2000. Its structure and the wording of all articles are similar.
2. Although the EIR Recast includes relevant and useful innovations, it has stuck with the framework of the EIR 2000 and mostly codified the jurisprudence of the CJEU.
3. The EIR Recast has not added any new concept to the text of the EIR 2000.
4. It is incorrect to say that the EIR Recast has not overhauled the *status quo* at all. On the contrary, the EIR Recast has departed from the text of its predecessor and is a completely new instrument which has rejected all existing concepts and rules.

**Question 1.5**

The EIR Recast is an instrument of a predominantly procedural nature (including private international law issues). Nevertheless, it contains a number of substantive provisions. Which one of the following provisions constitutes a harmonised (stand-alone) rule of substantive law?

1. Article 18 EIR Recast (“Effects of insolvency proceedings on pending lawsuits or arbitral proceedings”).
2. Article 40 EIR Recast (“Advance payment of costs and expenses”).
3. Article 7 EIR Recast (“Applicable law”).
4. Article 31 EIR Recast (“Honouring of an obligation to a debtor”).

**Question 1.6**

The EIR 2015 does not provide a definition of “insolvency” or “likelihood of insolvency”. What are the consequences of this?

1. The ECJ has provided a definition of “insolvency” in recent case law.
2. The European Commission has provided a definition of “insolvency” in its Recommendation on a “New Approach to Business Failure” published in 2014.
3. Each Member State will define “insolvency” in national legislation.
4. Deciding whether a debtor is “insolvent” or not is a matter for the ECJ to determine.

**Question 1.7**

The EIR Recast introduced the concept of “synthetic proceedings”. What are they?

1. “Synthetic proceedings” means that when an insolvency practitioner in the main insolvency proceedings has given an undertaking in accordance with Article 36, the court asked to open secondary proceedings should not, at the request of the insolvency practitioner, open them if they are satisfied that the undertaking adequately protects the general interests of local creditors.
2. “Synthetic proceedings” means that for the case at hand, several main proceedings can be opened, in addition to several secondary proceedings.
3. “Synthetic proceedings” means that when secondary proceedings are opened, these are automatically rescue proceedings, as opposed to liquidation proceedings.
4. “Synthetic proceedings” means that insolvency practitioners in all secondary proceedings should treat the proceedings they are dealing with as main proceedings for the purpose of protecting the interests of local creditors.

**Question 1.8**

The EIR Recast kept the concept of the “centre of main interests” (COMI) of the debtor, which already existed in the EIR 2000. What were the amendments adopted in relation to this concept?

1. The COMI of the debtor is not presumed to be “at the place of the registered office” anymore and the debtor will need to confirm where his COMI is before the beginning of each case.
2. Although the COMI of a debtor is still presumed to be “at the place of the registered office”, it is now possible to rebut this presumption, albeit only by the courts.
3. The rule that a company’s COMI conforms to its registered office is now an irrefutable presumption.
4. Although the COMI of a debtor is still presumed to be “at the place of the registered office”, it should now be possible to rebut this presumption based on Article 3 EIR Recast and Recital 31.

**Question 1.9**

In which of the following scenarios may the recognition of a foreign insolvency proceeding be denied under the EIR Recast?

1. Where the decision to open the insolvency proceedings was taken in flagrant breach of the right to be heard, which a person concerned by such proceedings enjoys.
2. The judgment, subject to recognition, was passed with incorrect application of the applicable substantive law.
3. The court, which has opened insolvency proceedings (originating court), most certainly did not have international insolvency jurisdiction to do so under the EIR Recast.
4. The rule applied by the court, which has opened insolvency proceedings (originating court), is unknown or does not have an equivalent in the law of the jurisdiction in which recognition is sought.

**Question 1.10**

In a cross-border dispute, the main proceedings before the German court concerns Schatz GmbH (registered in Germany) and Canetier SARL (registered in France). The case deals with an action to set aside four contested payments that amount to EUR 900,000. These payments were made pursuant to a sales agreement dated 29 December 2021, governed by Italian law. The contested payments have been made by Schatz GmbH to Canetier SARL before the former went insolvent. The insolvency practitioner of the company claims that the contested payments should be set aside because Canetier SARL must have been aware that Schatz GmbH was facing insolvency at the time the payments were made.

Considering the facts of the case and relevant provisions of the EIR Recast, which one of the following statements is the **most accurate**?

1. The insolvency practitioner will always succeed in his claim if he can clearly prove that under the *lex concursus*, the contested payments can be avoided (Article 7(2)(m) EIR Recast).
2. The contested transactions cannot be avoided if Canetier SARL can prove that the *lex causae* (including its general provisions and insolvency rules) does not allow any means of challenging the contested transactions, and provided that the parties did not choose that law for abusive or fraudulent ends.
3. The contested payments will not be avoided if Canetier SARL proves that such transactions cannot be challenged on the basis of the insolvency provisions of Italian law (Article 16 EIR Recast).
4. To defend the contested payments Canetier SARL can rely solely, in a purely abstract manner, on the unchallengeable character of the payments at issue on the basis of a provision of the *lex causae*.

**QUESTION 2 (direct questions) [10 marks]**

**Question 2.1 [maximum 2 marks]**

The following **two (2) statements** relate to particular provisions / concepts to be found in the EIR Recast. Indicate the name of the provision / concept (as well as the relevant EIR Recast article), addressed in each statement.

Statement 1. The presumptions that the registered office, the principal place of business and the habitual residence are the centre of main interests need to be rebuttable.

Statement 2. Proceedings covered by the scope of the EIR 2015 should include proceedings promoting the rescue of economically viable debtors, especially at a stage where there is a mere likelihood of insolvency.

**ANSWER:**

Statement 1: Article 3(1) of the EIR Recast. This relates to the center of main interest (COMI).

Statement 2: This is covered by Article 1 of the EIR Recast and the proceedings that relate to it are listed in Annexure A. These insolvency proceedings which encompass all forms of rescue as well and includes 112 procedures contained in Annexure A are referred to in point (4) of Article 2.

**Question 2.2 [maximum 3 marks]**

The EIR Recast is built upon the concept of modified universalism, as pure universalism has been deemed idealistic and impractical for the time being. Provide **three (3) examples** of provisions from the EIR Recast which highlight this modified universalism approach.

**ANSWER:**

Three examples of modified universalism can be found in Article 3(1) which gives courts in the jurisdiction of the debtor’s principal place of business the jurisdiction to open the insolvency proceedings. It further allows in terms of recital 23 secondary proceedings to run parallel to the main proceedings. In terms of recital 40 such parallel proceedings protect the rights and interests of creditors in other jurisdictions. In terms of recital 23 these secondary proceedings are only related to the assets in that secondary jurisdiction. In terms of Article 3(2) only one centre of main interest may exist. It further gives transparency to creditors in all member states. Another example of this is due the fact that insolvency practitioners in the centre of main interest can oversee the liquidation and distribution of assets in secondary proceedings.

**Question 2.3 [maximum 3 marks]**

Because pure universalism has not been adopted under the EIR 2015, main and secondary insolvency proceedings can be opened at the same time against the same debtor. In light of this, it is seminal that proper co-operation between the actors involved in concurrent proceedings takes place. It is therefore not surprising that co-operation has been introduced as an obligation on several actors in the EIR 2015. List **three (3) provisions** (recitals and / or articles) of the EIR Recast that deal with the obligation to co-operate.

**ANSWER:**

The obligations to co-operate can be found in Articles 41-43 and further recital 52 of the EIR Recast obliges practitioners in court to co-operate with respect to group insolvencies. Article 56 deals with co-operation between insolvency practitioners. Article 57 deals with co-operation between courts. Finally, Article 58 deals with co-operation between courts and practitioners.

**Question 2.4 [maximum 2 marks]**

It is widely accepted that the opening of secondary proceedings can hamper the efficient administration of the debtor’s estate. For this reason, the EIR Recast has introduced a number of legal instruments to avoid or otherwise control the opening, conduct and closure of secondary proceedings. Provide **two (2) examples** of such instruments and briefly (in one to three sentences) explain how they operate.

**ANSWER:**

The opening of secondary proceedings can be regulated by Article 38(2) EIR Recast which gives the practitioner in the main proceedings the ability to give an undertaking in accordance with Article 26. Whereby he/she can request the court to not open secondary proceedings and effectively stay such proceedings. Further in terms of recital 35 EIR Recast a court can grant a temporary stay which mirrors the temporary stay granted in main proceedings. This assists in business rescue and safeguards the efficacy of the moratorium granted by the main proceedings.

**QUESTION 3 (essay-type questions) [15 marks in total]**

*In addition to the correctness, completeness (including references to case law, if applicable) and originality of your answers to the questions below, marks may be awarded or deducted on the basis of your presentation, expression and writing skills.*

**Question 3.1 [maximum 5 marks]**

During the reform process of the EIR 2000, what main elements were identified by the European Commission as needing revision within the framework of the Regulation (whether adopted or not)?

**ANSWER:**

During the reform process it was clear that harmonization and regulation was required. The EIR 2000 had a goal akin to the one that formed the foundation of the EU convention. This being modified universalism and the establishment of the “center of main interest”. It further touched on the harmonization of law across the member states. The Reform process lead to the EIR 2000 Recast. The main scope of it was to simply the old insolvency regime and its application aimed at providing liquidators and subsequently named insolvency practitioners the simplified method together with the courts in resolving insolvency and debtor matters. The EIR Recast is an instrument of private internationally law. The scope of which applies to collective proceedings, interim proceedings and are based on the laws of insolvency. They also acknowledge the need for rescue, reorganization and compounding of debt. It looked at aligning national procedures and this was done in terms of recital 9. Annexure A contains the main elements supplies clarity, guidance and direction to EU member states and provides rationale of sovereignty regarding insolvency in the EU member states.

**Question 3.2 [maximum 5 marks]**

While the EIR Recast was welcomed by most stakeholders, it was also criticised by some as a “missed opportunity” and “modest”. List **two (2) flaws** or shortcomings of the EIR Recast and explain how you consider they could be corrected.

**ANSWER:**

I submit that it was remiss that part 26 of the UK Companies Act 2006 was left out of the recast. Such schemes of arrangement could be beneficial and albeit that the UK has left the European Union it could have assisted in the rescue of many companies.

**Question 3.3 [maximum 5 marks]**

The European Insolvency Regulation is a choice-of-forum instrument, which although aiming at procedural harmonisation, did not harmonise the substantive insolvency laws of the Member States. Because of lingering disparities among the national insolvency regimes across the EU, the European institutions introduced the Directive on Preventive Restructuring Frameworks in 2019, which is meant to dovetail the European Insolvency Regulation. List **two (2)** ways in which the Regulation and the Directive differ.

**ANSWER:**

The directive and regulation differ in that the regulation aims to harmonize insolvency proceedings and is not aimed at rescuing or restructuring companies. This was one of the shortcomings of the EIR Recast. The directive attempts to harmonize restructuring and debt relief mechanisms throughout the member states. It however only sets minimum standards it does however set common goals of objectives, the resultant effect, it is hoped, will lead to coherence of the various rescue frameworks. Another way in which the regulation and directive differ is that the regulation is pre-emptory and must be followed by all member states. Whilst the directives are voluntary.

**QUESTION 4 (fact-based application-type question) [15 marks in total]**

**Scenario**

Bella SARL is a French-registered company selling cosmetic products. The company had opened its first store in Strasbourg, France in 2010 and has warehouses across Europe, including in Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain and Portugal. Its main warehouse is located in Cork, Ireland. All of its employees are located in these countries and most of its customers are also located in these countries, yet some online purchases are coming mainly from the Netherlands and Poland.

In 2011, Bella SARL entered into a loan agreement with a Spanish bank because it was hoping to expand its reach onto the Spanish luxury cosmetic market. It opened a bank account with the bank while also negotiating prices with local suppliers. It signed some (non-binding) memoranda of understanding with three Madrid-based suppliers.

Unfortunately for Bella SARL, the timing of this initiative coincided with the Great Economic and Financial crisis which hit Europe in the late 2000s. By 2014 the company was in financial difficulty, yet managed to keep afloat for another few years. On 20 June 2017, it filed a petition to open safeguard proceedings in the Strasbourg High Court in France.

**Question 4.1 [maximum 5 marks]**

Assume that the timeline is slightly different and, therefore, assume that it is not the EIR 2015 that applies but the EIR 2000.

***Does the Strasbourg High Court have jurisdiction to open the requested safeguard proceedings under the EIR 2000?***

You must justify your answer when explaining why it does or does not have jurisdiction. Your answer should contain references to the applicable law and the relevant CJEU jurisprudence.

**ANSWER:**

The Strasbourg High Court will have jurisdiction as France is the centre of main interest in terms of Article 3(1) of the EIR 2000. This is clear due to the case of Susanne Staubitz-Schreiber, ECLI: EU: C: 2006: 39.

**Question 4.2 [maximum 5 marks]**

Assume that the timeline is as explained in the original scenario above and that the French High Court opens safeguard proceedings on 30 June 2017.

***Will the EIR Recast be applicable to the proceedings?***

Your answer should address the EIR Recast’s scope and contain **all** steps taken to answer the question.

**ANSWER:**

The recast will be applicable as the scope of the recast is binding on all EU members with the exception of Denmark and recital 25 contains important provisions relating to proceedings where a debtors centre of main interest is with an EU company. It is however important to note that in terms of recital 27 the court of its own volition must ensure that it has jurisdiction over the matter.

**Question 4.3 [maximum 5 marks]**

An Italian bank files a petition to open secondary insolvency proceedings in Italy with the purpose of securing an Italian insolvency distribution ranking.

***Given the facts of the case, can such proceedings be opened in Italy under the EIR Recast?***

Your answer should contain references to the applicable law and the relevant CJEU jurisprudence.

**ANSWER:**

Should the debtor have assets in Italy and the debtor effectively has an establishment in terms of Article 3(2) of the EIR Recast the Italian bank can open secondary proceedings. It must however be noted that in terms of recital 23 the main insolvency proceedings have universal scope and the secondary proceedings can only relate to the assets in Italy. In case c-327/13, *Burgo Group SpA v Illochroma SA, ECLI:EU:C:2014:2158 (SEPT 4 2014),* the CJEU ruled that once main insolvency proceedings have been opened in a member state other than that of its registered office secondary proceedings can be opened in the court of the jurisdiction where its registered office is.

**\*\*\* END OF ASSESSMENT \*\*\***