


Kluwer Arbitration Blog

The 2016 Global Pound Conference Series!

Michael McIlwrath (MDisputes) · Monday, May 18th, 2015

In April 1976, an event now known as the Pound Conference ignited modern ADR in the  USA, launching discussion of what may have become the “greatest reform in the history of the country’s judicial system”.¹ Forty years later, all stakeholders in the dispute prevention and resolution fields around the world are being invited to participate in a series of unique thought leadership events around the globe under the auspices of a Global Pound Conference (“GPC”) series.

The GPC has a remarkable goal: to shape the future of dispute resolution and access to justice in the 21st Century.

An invitation to shape the future of dispute resolution

The bold program, which will generate debate and actionable data from stakeholders through events taking place around the world has been initiated by the [International Mediation Institute \(IMI\)](#), a non-profit organization that does not itself provide any dispute resolution services, but promotes quality and transparency in mediation.²

IMI initiated the GPC as a joint effort by dispute resolution institutions, service providers, users associations, advisors associations and other organisations to enable all stakeholders to participate actively.

Although IMI has initiated the GPC, the series will by no means be focused exclusively on mediation.

The series will include discussions about the full dispute resolution spectrum, including negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, litigation and hybrid processes.

Who will participate?

All participants, including those attending physical meetings or participating in them online, will be able to express their views and preferences and help to shape the future of dispute resolution in their countries and internationally. A dedicated GPC online platform and physical meetings will permit exchanges of data via smartphone and tablet voting apps accessed by all participants, whether users, providers, advisors, educators, adjudicators, policymakers and other stakeholders in the ADR communities. The data will be streamed in its raw state to all participants in real time.

How the GPC will be conducted?

In the current phase of planning, it is envisioned that most of the questions will be common to all GPC events, and the technology will allow the data to be segmented, for example by stakeholder group (e.g., the perspectives of users, advisors, providers and others) to enable comparison and detailed analysis.

The initial plan for the GPC was for a series of meetings in 15 cities. Initial interest in the GPC, however, suggests that the minimal number is more likely to be 25 and potentially even more.

Thousands of participants will vote, creating by far the most extensive and reliable data record in the dispute resolution field, enabling fundamental change to occur in how dispute resolution is practiced almost everywhere.

Before any voting takes place, many of the world's leading thinkers and users of dispute resolution services, locally and globally, will have a chance to express inspiring thoughts about what is working well and where there is need for improvement.

How the GPC will change the conversation about dispute resolution?

Currently, the ADR field suffers from a serious deficit of reliable data. Even the letters “ADR” are interpreted to mean different things, from “Alternative Dispute Resolution”, “Amicable Dispute Resolution” and “Appropriate Dispute Resolution” to the rather cynical “Alarming Drop in Revenues” among lawyers who fear that clients settling cases will deprive them of work. Some users believe “ADR” precludes negotiation, litigation or arbitration. Others see it as including all forms of dispute resolution and dispute prevention techniques. Some believe ADR relates primarily to mediation, however that term is defined.³

Regardless of definitions, users' opinions and needs are rarely collected or expressed, and the service side of the dispute resolution industry is left to make assumptions and guesswork on many critical issues, sometimes relying on advisors who are not necessarily aware of all their clients' business or relational priorities. The GPC intends to cut through this on a global scale, enabling users, advisors, service providers, mediators, adjudicators, educators and policy makers to agree on common concepts both locally and internationally by generating credible and actionable evidence.

The GPC series may possibly become the most important happening in the dispute resolution field since the US 1976 Pound Conference that it is named after.

How to Participate?

The GPC Series is being co-ordinated by a Central Organising Group (COG) and will be implemented by Local Organising Committees (LOCs) throughout the world in 2016. Current cities where LOCs are already being set up or contemplated include Amsterdam, Barcelona, Beijing, Dubai, Frankfurt, Geneva, Hong Kong, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Lagos, Lisbon, London, Los Angeles, Madrid, Milano, Moscow, Miami, New York, Paris, San Francisco, Sao Paolo, Shanghai, Singapore, Sydney and Toronto. A leading professional international congress organiser, [Kenes Group](#), with great experience of large-scale data-sharing conferences in the global healthcare sector will be assisting the COG in convening the events and in developing the IT platform that will underpin the GPC Series.

Sponsors, partners and other supporters, including volunteers and media partners, are invited to create or join LOCs for this ground-breaking series. Significant start-up funding for the GPC has already been made available by the international law firm Herbert Smith Freehills, as a platinum sponsor, and global dispute resolution institution JAMS, as gold sponsor. Global partners already include leading international and regional arbitration and mediation institutions, and other organizations that play leading roles in the development of the law.

For more information on the GPC Series, and to get involved, please go to <https://imimmediation.org/global-pound-conference> or contact the COG at GPCSeries@IMImediation.org. You will also be able to follow developments on Twitter@GPCSeries, as well as in other social media to generate a truly global debate and discussion. The goal is to enable the Global Pound Conference to benefit all stakeholders and to help shape the future of dispute resolution, providing appropriate access to justice for all.

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1 Hon. Wayne D. Brazil (U.S. Magistrate, N. Dist. Calif), Court ADR 25 Years After Pound: Have We Found a Better Way?, 18 Ohio State Journal on Dispute Resolution 93, at 149 (2002).

2 *See*
<https://kluwermediationblog.com/2014/09/25/harvesting-data-to-shape-the-future-of-international-dispute-resolution/>; and
<https://imimmediation.org/shaping-the-future-of-adr-the-urgent-need-for-data.download>.

3 “Mediation in the European Union and Abroad: 60 States Divided by a Common Word” in Chapter 2 of Manon Schonewille & Fred Schonewille (eds.) The Variegated Landscape of Mediation: A Comparative Study of Mediation Regulation and Practices in Europe and the World, The Hague, The Netherlands: Eleven International Publishing, 2014. *See*
<https://schonewille-schonewille.com/data/files/Chapter%20Schonewille-Lack%20from%20The%20variegated%20landscape%20of%20mediation.pdf>.

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