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**THE APPEAL AGAINST ENFORCEMENT IN
CIVIL PROCEDURE**

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ABSTRACT

Key words: appeal against enforcement, suspension, enforcement, enforceable title, appellant

One of the key levers in ensuring the rule of law is to offer solid guarantees in the performance of justice and in observance of the right to a fair trial. These goals would not be possible without the creation of legislative norms to give effect to the principle of legality, the right to a fair trial, impartiality, and celerity in the judgment of the case.

The course of the civil trial has two segments: *the judgment* and *the enforcement*.

The essence of the enforcement is the existence of an enforceable title; no enforcement can begin without it. Once the enforcement procedure has been initiated, the main procedural means through which those interested or injured by it can obtain the abolition of illegal acts or measures of this stage is the appeal against enforcement.

The scientific approach aims to make an incursion in the sphere of civil appeal against enforcement, with emphasis on the new regulations stipulated in the current Civil Procedure Code and on judicial practice.

In relation to the motivation for the choice of the subject, we appreciate that the analysis of the appeal against enforcement is of interest and constantly develops problems in the practice of the courts, due in particular to the many reasons that can be invoked, but also to the legislative instability in the field of enforcement and to mismatches of legal texts.

As a consequence, the civil appeal against enforcement is a permanent source of research for both doctrinaires and practitioners. At the same time, the appeal against enforcement is of particular practical significance in relation to the stages of the civil trial. If the court phase offers a lot of leverage in support of the participants in the activity carried out before the judicial bodies, during the enforcement stage, the appeal against enforcement is the way of verifying the legality and the groundness of the enforceable title. We can say that it is a supervision of the lawful and founded realization of the enforcement activity, which results in the effective birth of a subjective right.

This study seeks to give a broader picture of the research topic, viewed both from the theoretical perspective and also under the spectrum of practice, exemplifying with cases encountered in the courts of law.

In order to elaborate the study, we have aimed at: defining the essential concepts, identifying and analyzing the practical problems generated by the appeal against the enforcement, performing a comparative analysis of certain institutions within the appeal procedure, both temporarily (the comparison between present and prior provisions) and by reference to different branches of law or other foreign legislation.

The specific way of investigating the topic is achieved through a complex of research methods. With respect to the methodology of scientific research, in order to achieve the proposed objectives, we approached general and specific methods of the research in legal sciences:

- - *transversal methods* - some sections and even chapters of the research are exclusively concerned with the issues related to the current regulations, namely the approach of the legal provisions regarding the appeal against enforcement in the current Civil Procedure Code,
- - *longitudinal methods*: which include the comparative and diachronic presentation of the succession of regulations regarding the theme approached in relation to the social-historical context,
- - *observation methods*: the documentary study and the direct observation in courts of the cases concerning the appeal against enforcement,
- - *case study methods*: by means of the case study the research analyzes some particular aspects regarding the reasons for the appeal against enforcement, especially for the judicial practice,
- - *gathering information methods*,
- - *methods of interpretation*: these appear under two pillars, namely the *exegetical* method and the *analytical-synthetic* method. As far as the exegetical method is concerned, it is the use of the logical and grammatical interpretation of the legal text - this way, criticisms of the current legal regulations can be brought, the provisions regarding the appeal against enforcement in relation to other auxiliary legal texts can be interpreted. The analytical - synthetic method starts from the analysis of the legal norms in force, aiming at discovering the legal principle underlying them. Through the comparative research of the principles and the establishment of their specific characters on the path of synthesis, essential principles emerge.
- - *methods of processing information (both qualitative and quantitative)*,

- - *the comparative method* occupies an important place in the research of the analyzed topic. The method involves highlighting the similarities and differences related to the essence of the analyzed institution,
- *quantitative methods* used in research to analyze some legal phenomena that are commensurable (e.g. the frequency of certain grounds for appealing the enforcement), allowing observations and conclusions to be drawn on causes and incidence of a type or other of appeals in relation to current legislation and social reality.

All these methods have been used in close interdependence, completing one other in this research.

The strong practical nature of this study is to help clarify and understand legal provisions, to find possible solutions to situations where regulations do not address these issues.

The actuality of the research derives from the fact that the provisions of the current Civil Procedure Code have been and are in constant change (we mention that the enforcement is the part that has undergone the most changes in a short period of time), and the legislative influx and socio-economic issues constantly give rise to new causes that the person injured in an illegal enforcement may submit to the court filter.

However, all solutions given in appeals against enforcement must respect the „right to a fair trial”, as developed in the case law of the „European Court of Human Rights”.

In relation to the content of the study, it is devoted to the appeal against enforcement - the second phase of the Romanian civil trial, one of the few levers (*sui generis* appeals - as we have appreciated) at the disposal of the injured and interested persons in this procedural stage, designed to verify the lawfulness and groundness of the enforcement itself/of the individual acts of enforcement.

The architectural construction of the thesis is carried out on nine levels (9 chapters divided into sections and subsections) which closely follow the analysis of the institution of the appeal against enforcement under the spectrum of the provisions of the current civil procedural regulations, and having as a comparison the previous regulations of the Civil Procedure Code from 1865. In addition to the theoretical aspects, the study contains numerous case-law examples to clarify certain concepts or to clarify some issues arising from insufficient regulation or legislative mismatches.

The beginning of the scientific study has the role to constitute a general incursion in the sphere of enforcement, viewed from an historical perspective and then pointing to the "key elements" of this stage of the Romanian civil trial: *the enforceable title* (highlighting the main categories of documents having the attribute of enforceability), *the bailiff* (whose duties have increased substantially in the phase of enforcement in the light of the new civil procedural law), the enforcement court (which also maintains a significant role in the regulation of the present Code, especially as regards the verification of the legality and the groundness of the enforcement acts, certain measures, the solution of some procedural incidents; worthy to be emphasized is that the intervention of the court does not occur *ex officio*, but only upon the notification of the bailiff or the interested party). Within **Chapter I** is presented the legal nature of the appeal against enforcement, with different conceptions, both monistic and mixed. Starting from the subject matter, the thesis embraced in relation to the legal nature of the appeal against the enforcement is that of a *sui generis* appeal, an appeal specific to the enforcement stage and inadmissible during the trial stage. It is not forgotten the issue of enforcement, pointed out by the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights in the cases against Romania.

Chapter II of the thesis follows the forms and object of the appeal against enforcement. We note, as a novelty, that the legislator has consecrated an article with the marginal name of "the object of the appeal against enforcement". Similar to the old procedure, the current regulation does not contain a division/legal classification of the types of appeals against enforcement. The analysis of the appeal against enforcement and of the appeal against the enforceable title was made in the light of the causal reason-object report, of the competent court for ruling over the case, the term of exercise, as well as the problems that can be brought into light by these forms. The questionable issues dealt with in this regard were: the admissibility of the appeal against the enforceable title in the event of using the procedure provided for in art. 443 civil procedure code (we agreed that there are situations in which both remedies could be used, provided the subject of the clarification is a distinct one); the not-correlation of the legal provisions of art. 712 par. 2 civil procedure code (which constitutes the general framework of the appeal against the enforceable title) with art. 714 par. 3 civil procedure code (regarding the competent court in the matter of the appeal against the enforceable title) and 718 par. 2 civil procedure code (which concerns the appeal within the same form of appeal against enforcement) in respect with the enforceable titles which may be the subject of this form of appeal (please note

that by reading *stricto sensu* the first article indicated and without being corroborated with the other two legal texts, it is concluded that the object would be made exclusively by court rulings). One of the sections concerned the appeal "against the bailiff's refusal to carry on the enforcement or to execute an act of enforcement under the law". The essential difference from the old procedure is the legitimacy given by the legislator to appeal "against the bailiff's refusal to carry on" and not to "start an enforcement procedure." The change is welcome, as the new aspects perfectly fit the elements of admissibility of the appeal against enforcement, namely that enforcement is begun. Moreover, the current Civil Procedure Code provides, at art. 665 par. 2, a special way of challenging the refusal of the bailiff to start the enforcement, that is, the complaint. We also appreciate the changes brought by art. 37 point 11 of "Law no. 76/2012 "to art. 56 of the "Law no. 188/2000 "on restricting the scope of the acts that may be challenged by a complaint in the situations indicated by art. 7 par. 1 lit b-i of the special law, changes occurred after the *de lege ferenda* proposal made by the renowned civil procedure specialist Prof. Ioan Leş PhD. This has suppressed the overlapping of the two means of challenging the bailiff's acts of refusal. As regards the object of the appeal against enforcement, elements with an innovative aspect are highlighted in the current civil procedure: the possibility of contesting "the reports of the bailiff" and the "reports allowing the enforcement". At the same time, due to the change of optics in the matter of enforcing a title, the possibility of attacking the report by which "the enforcement was allowed", as provided by the old art. 399 par. 2 ind. 1 C. pr. It should be noted that the provisions regarding the enforceability procedure, as well as those regarding the report of allowing the enforcement, have undergone most changes after the appearance of the new Civil Procedure Code, a matter widely dealt with in the research.

Chapter III is dedicated to the subjects and parties in the appeal against enforcement. Both persons / bodies with active legal quality as well as those having passive quality in an appeal are dealt with. The analysis primarily concerns the debtors (most interested, as a rule, in promoting the appeal against enforcement); then creditors (their incidence in the presence of active procedural legitimacy being rare but not non-existent); third parties who, although foreign to the binding legal relationship, may in certain circumstances justify an interest in the promotion of the claim (discussions arise in the case of an appeal against the enforceable title, hypothesis where the request made by a third party is inadmissible); the prosecutor (to whom the legitimacy is granted *ex lege* in the cases expressly provided by the provisions of art. 92 of the Civil

Procedure Code). The role played by the bailiff on the scene of the appeal against enforcement can only be one of passive legal legitimacy in certain circumstances determined in a limitative manner. However, his position in the case of the appeal against the enforceable title is debatable, although we do not exclude, *de plano*, the possibility of promoting a request for clarification, we emphasize that it can be successfully opposed the lack of interest and the lack of affirmation of personal rights. A problem that should be reported is that of the admissibility of the appeal if the appellant does not promote the request in contradiction with all parties of the enforcement. In this case, the question that arises is that of the court ruling: will the court have to overrule the appeal as inadmissible or, by virtue of its active role, will have the duty to bring all parties of the enforcement into question? However, we appreciate that the court, will not be able, *ex officio*, to order the completion of the trial with all parties of the enforcement. By virtue of their active role as well as the provisions of art. 78 Civil procedure code, will be able to rise to the parties' debate summoning all parties, and in the case of opposition from the appellant, to reject the petition as inadmissible.

Filing the appeal against enforcement could not be justified without the existence of reasons that would lead to the necessity of challenging the enforcement or enforcement acts. A wide range of reasons have been highlighted in the case-law, such as: matters relating to the existence and validity of the enforceable title, grounds relating to the order of seizing the goods or persons, the meaning, scope and enforcement of the enforceable title, determination of the sizeable goods, breaking the rules of enforcement, etc., reasons closely interrelated with other branches of law etc. An important role in the analysis of the reasons lies with those related to the enforcement (viewed from the historical perspective, with the many changes that have resulted in extensive discussions in the specialized literature and the invocation of unconstitutionality pleas; the shared view is that it is not necessarily wrong to carry out a preliminary verification by the court of the enforceable title, before actual enforcement acts are carried out, but our proposal is to establish a filter complete, having powers to verify formal aspects in relation to the approval). The emphasis is not only on the issues related to allowing the Romanian enforceable titles, but also on allowing enforceable titles made under the "EC Regulation no. 44/2001 ", and the question of the appeal against the report allowing the enforcement is discussed (see Chapter 5, we consider that this is a special, *sui generis*, remedy). The chapter also contains a case study on

the enforceability of bank credit contracts assigned to another person who does not have banking duties, which are currently subject to numerous appeals against enforcement.

Another aspect developed within the thesis is that of the delay in which the appeal against enforcement may be filed. The legal basis is found in art. 715 Civil procedure code, entitled "delays". A first issue addressed is that of the legal nature of the delay, which is a revocation one, susceptible to interruption and suspension, as well as to re-establishment. Subsequently, it is intended to highlight the types of delays within the analyzed institution: the general delay of 15 days (valid both in the case of the appeal against enforcement itself and in the case of the appeal against the bailiff's refusal to carry on the enforcement or enforcement act") and the moment when it begins to run, as well as special delays present both in the Civil Procedure Code and in some special laws. Of note is the return of the legislator to the 15-day delay and the appeal against the bailiff's reports - which are not, according to law, final. We consider it beneficial the legislator having renounced at the previous 5-day delay, and there is no indication of the parallel flow of two delays for appealing two or more enforcement actions. At the same time, it cannot be argued that a 5-day delay would have implied a very high degree of celerity, as the written procedure, prior to the trial, is sufficiently long. In relation to the appeal against the enforceable title, we have considered that the legal provisions also refer to a general delay (as long as we recognize the existence of the appeal against the enforceable title as a form of the appeal against enforcement and not as an exception to the rule of appeal, it is natural to give the delay the same nature), valid for this form of appeal against enforcement, and not a special delay, as was appreciated by most of the doctrine. However, the issues related to the sanctions in case of non-observance of the legal delay have not been forgotten.

The next chapter sets out the conditions for the admissibility of the appeal against enforcement, as well as the limits established in this regard. The legal provisions of the matter can be found in art. 713 (in relation to the appeal against enforcement itself and the one against the enforceable title), to which are added the provisions of art. 712 par. 2 applicable exclusively to the appeal against the enforceable title. It should be noted that if any of the cases expressly determined by the above mentioned articles is found, the appeal against enforcement will be overruled as inadmissible. An element of novelty brought by the current Civil Procedure Code is the inadmissibility of invoking factual or legal grounds that could have been challenged during trial, and in the case of an arbitration judgment (joining the inadmissibility of invoking factual

and legal grounds in the appeal against enforcement of judgments). However, the legislator's inconsistency in formulating legal texts is notable: par.1 of art. 713 C. pr. civil is not correlated to par. 2, omitting to indicate the arbitral judgment in par. 2 of art. 713 C. pr. As a *de lege ferenda* proposal, we consider that the deletion of the word "debtor" from par. 1 of art. 713 C. pr., would be needed, whereas the current legislation limits the prohibition of invoking factual or legal grounds to only one participant in the enforcement, excluding others (e.g. a creditor or a third party); by interpreting the legal text *per a contrario* as it appears in the present form, the appellant or defendant creditor may bring in the appeal, factual or legal grounds, even breaching the principle of the *res judicata*. Other elements of novelty appear in the inadmissibility of filing a new appeal against enforcement of the same party "for reasons that existed at the date of the first appeal" (to note in this regard the analysis of the moment until which the appeal against enforcement can be completed, adding " new reasons "), regulations regarding the limits of filing the appeal against enforcement in relation to third parties claiming a real right and to creditors who do not enforce their claims.

The issue of the competence to rule over the appeal against enforcement is treated in Chapter VII of the thesis. The analysis looks at aspects related to the enforcement court (with all the legislative and jurisprudential problems resulting from the declaration of the unconstitutionality of the old article 650 par. 1 of the Civil Procedure Code and of the "normative vacuum" appeared), the jurisdiction to rule over the appeals against enforcement itself and the appeals against the enforceable title. The questionable issues arise as to the absolute or relative nature of the rules in the matter, the possibility for a court to be an enforcement court, the jurisdiction in the case of foreign enforceable titles, including the admissibility of the appeal against the title if it was issued by to a foreign court. Moreover, we also believe that there are still some issues that should be clarified, including through legislative intervention: the need to set up specialized panels on enforcement (to deal with claims and incidents arising during this phase of the civil trial and, implicitly and specifically, we could say, the appeal against enforcement); the establishment of specialized panels of judges in the branch of law in which the appeal against enforcement is filed (especially in the appeal stage) - it would be necessary to expressly state the functional jurisdiction of the tribunals in solving the appeal against the judgment issued in the appeal against enforcement, (especially with regard to the increased

complexity of appeals in certain branches of the law such as the tax law)¹. At the same time, we consider that the determination of substantive jurisdiction only by reference to the subject-matter of the dispute - that of appeal against enforcement - in this matter and establishing it in favour of the enforcement court (except in the case of disputes concerning an appeal against the enforceable title where the enforceable title is represented by a court decision), it is not enough. It might have been worth mentioning the maintenance of a value criterion that would lead to the determination of material jurisdiction. This is due to the fact that, in most cases, the complexity of appeals against enforcement exceeds the complexity of the other litigations attributed to the jurisdiction of the courts. *De lege ferenda*, we do not exclude the possibility of establishing at the level of the enforcement courts, certain filter panels of judges that analyze form matters and obvious irregularities in the appeal against enforcement, in order to allow or overrule, in principle, the appeal against enforcement, especially since this type of request is not subject to the regularization procedure. At the same time, these filter panels of judges could also rule over requests for enforcement, which, unfortunately, are currently subjected to a more formal analysis and are never real and effective.

An extensive area of this study is the last two chapters on the trial procedure for the appeal against enforcement and the suspension of enforcement.

The scientific approach sets the general and special procedural elements, surprising the new issues brought by the current regulation in the field. The analysis focuses on the form and content of the claim, the related stamp duty, the obligation to lodge the contestation (with the express reference in the legal text of the matter), the admissibility of the counter-claim, the urgency and celerity of the case, and the exemption from the applicability of the regularization procedure provided by art. 200 Civil procedure code, summoning parties, admissibility of evidence. One aspect of specificity is "the need for the bailiff to transmit certified copies of the contested acts", which generated the analysis of the time and the delay for the transmission, the explanation of the words "execution acts" and "the interested party" who will pay the costs of copying, how to determine the costs of transmission and the court's amendment of the amount, as well as the sanction applied in case of the refusal to send or to pay the expenses. Last but not least, the possible decision in the appeal against enforcement are highlighted in detail. Regarding appeals against the judgment, they will depend on the form of the appeal against enforcement as

¹See intra. Chapter. VII for details

they have been developed. A contributing aspect of the study relates to the determination of the form given to the decision issued in the appeal against enforcement: enforceable judgment or report? Although the practice of courts is inclined to issue judgments, we appreciate that by law the solutions can only take the form of enforceable reports, by reference to the provisions of art. 651 par. 3 and 4 civil procedure code. *De lege ferenda*, a legislative intervention would be required to establish firmly what type of decision should be given in the case of the appeal against enforcement itself and which leaves no room for interpretation since, according to present legal provisions, the decisions issued might be annulled.

An aspect of interest both in theoretical and practical terms is that of suspending enforcement. Chapter IX follows this issue, starting from the definition of the concept, followed by the classification of the suspension of enforcement, the pointing out the features of judicial suspension (with discussion of its incidental character - valid from our point of view only in the case of the suspension formulated within the appeal against enforcement), as well as the analysis in all aspects of the two types of judicial suspension related to the appeal against enforcement: suspension of the enforcement filed within the appeal against enforcement (we mention that we do not agree with the name "suspension on the merits" - that was embraced in doctrine) and temporary suspension. In relation to the first type of suspension, the conditions for the admissibility of the request are highlighted: a written request, provision of a security at the court's disposal (amply treated and raising questions about the method of setting the amount, the remedy against the amount of the security and the lawful legal process in its promotion, the incidence of public legal aid in the matter of the security - including in relation to ECHR rulings in the matter, the person who must pay the security, the time at which it can be paid, the cases in which the compulsory suspension with no security - novelty of the Civil Procedure Code, place of security payment and its destination, breach of the principles of fairness and equality of rights of parties by exempting institutions and public authorities from the provision of security in order to suspend the enforcement), the payment of the stamp duty. Then, the substantive conditions to determine suspension are developed, as well as the legal assumptions under which suspension is mandatory - an innovative aspect of the current civil procedural regulations. The competency aspects are then fixed, also insisting on the moment at which such a request can be promoted. In relation to this latter aspect, the scientific approach seeks to answer the following questions: what is the time up until which a request for suspension of enforcement can be filed? Is the

request for suspension of enforcement a modification/completion of action within the meaning of art. 204 C. pr. civ? It is the mention in art. 719 par. 1 civil procedure code concerning the separate request, an exception to the general provisions established by art. 204 par. 1 C. pr. civ.? Will such a request be admissible? Or will the court overrule it on account of the tardiness in its promotion? Is it necessary/mandatory to file a contestation against the suspension request? The proposed responses arise from the analysis of the legal nature of the suspension, that of a procedural incident, a measure designed to temporarily suspend enforcement. Referring to the trial procedure of the request for suspension within the appeal against enforcement, we mention the contentious aspect, the obligation to summons the parties as well as its urgent character. The issued decision is the report, some aspects regarding the effects, the duration and the termination of the suspension being also looked upon. The case study inserted in the chapter has in the foreground the suspension of enforcement in the special eviction procedure. The second form of judicial suspension in connection to the appeal against enforcement is the temporary suspension. Starting from the changes that have taken place over time, the institution's analysis is then followed by the competent court to rule over the request (with particular interest in the panel in which the temporary suspension is to be dealt with; we take the view that the trial of the temporary suspension should be attributed to the same panel which will also rule over the appeal against enforcement), the conditions for the admissibility of the temporary suspension, issues related to the decision issued, the appeals and the duration of the measure. A section is also devoted to the comparative aspects of the two types of suspension.

All the chapters contain comparative law elements, as well as extensive jurisprudence, which give the study a strong practical character.

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