

Abstract (EN): Bill of Lading and other Shipping Documents in the International Maritime Transport

Main aim of this thesis is an introduction to the law regulating shipping documents used in the international maritime transport and summary of current and possible future development in this area of law. The relationships arising from issuance and handling with the shipping documents may be quite complicated and the purpose of this thesis is to present these issues that have not been explored deeply in the Czech Republic yet.

The original reason that led me into choice of this topic is my personal interest in international trade, ships and securities. The shipping documents enable smooth operation of the international transport and the international transport facilitates the international trade as such. At present, almost all goods at the market are being shipped via ocean during their way to the final customer. The entire movement of goods via ocean is being conducted under shipping documents and the significance of the shipping documents is therefore considerable.

As a result of speed and volume sprout of the transport during last two decades, as well as growing popularity of door-to-door multimodal transport and computerization of all data and documents in general, the transport documents are undergoing extensive changes. The most notable amendment to the transport documents is their gradual dematerialization and formation of transport documents alternative to the bill of lading. Another trend is a broadening usage of multimodal transport documents that cover also inland transport. The last mentioned tendency brings legal issues arising from the transport documents also to the landlocked countries, such as the Czech Republic.

The text is divided into seven parts. The first part introduces the topic of the thesis and elucidates its aim and purpose. The second part describes the basic subjects and relationships of the international maritime transport and assesses the main issues of transport documents today. The third chapter deals with mutual relationships between provisions of international treaties, EU law and Czech law, their application and priority. The fourth part introduces the bill of lading as a security, depicts its functions and contents, conveys statements that may be included in the bill of lading and criticizes the current state of the bill of lading. Fifth part is dedicated to shipping documents alternative to the bill of lading. The sixth part introduces the electronic bill of lading, indicates possible solutions to electronic bills of lading as documents of title, summarizes problems of computerization of securities and offers future development solutions.

The last part emphasizes the need for dematerialization of the bill of lading and highlights the increasing impact of the international maritime and multimodal transport and therefore the transport documents on trade in the Czech Republic. The possible future development is discussed, conclusions provided and hypothesis established in the other parts of the thesis is affirmed.