

Obituary – Professor Reimer Schmidt

By Dr. Michael Muller-Stuler

On November 14th Professor Dr. iur. Dr. Ing. h.c. Reimer Schmidt died at his home aged 86. He was well known worldwide for his academic brilliance and his achievements as an insurance executive.

Reamer Schmidt started his career in Hamburg where he qualified as a lawyer in 1949 and – after his doctorate and his postdoctoral qualification (“Habilitation”) – became lecturer at Hamburg University for Civil Law. From 1954 to 1964 he was also sole managing director of Deutsche Rückversicherung AG, a post he gave up after he had become an Ordinary Professor of Civil, Commercial and Insurance Law at Hamburg University in 1961. In 1967, however, he moved back to insurance practice joining Aachener und Münchener Versicherungen in Aachen, the third largest German insurance group, where he served until 1981 as member of the executive board and chief group executive and afterwards until 1991 as chairman of the supervisory board. Additionally, he held various high appointments in the market, e.g. member of the presidential council of the German Insurance Association. He kept his link with teaching as honorary professor at Rheinisch Westfälische Technische Hochschule Aachen. For many years he was chairman of the Deutscher Verein für Versicherungswissenschaft and a member of the Presidential Council of AIDA.

Throughout his life Reimer Schmidt was a prolific writer of papers and books on a wide range of insurance subjects from broking to liability, company law, supervisory law, the Common Market and recently the reformation of the German Insurance Treaty Act (“VVG”). Best known and probably most used are the insurance dictionary “Versicherungsalphabet”, now in its 10th edition (by v. Fürstenwerth and WeiB) and the “Prölss VAG”, a glossary to the Insurance Supervision Act (Versicherungsaufsichtsgesetz), now in its 11th edition. Academics from all over the world honoured him on his 60th birthday by a “Festschrift” and on his 75th by a Colloquium.

His thinking was innovative and unorthodox. His interests were not restricted to insurance and law but also included aspects of various other subjects such as economics, mathematics and engineering. His thinking was characterised by its forward direction: he spotted new questions long before others, e.g. in 1962 he presented a paper in London on “The interpretation of the Treaty of Rome as it affects insurance”. Reimer Schmidt is being mourned by many academics and disciples in Germany and elsewhere.