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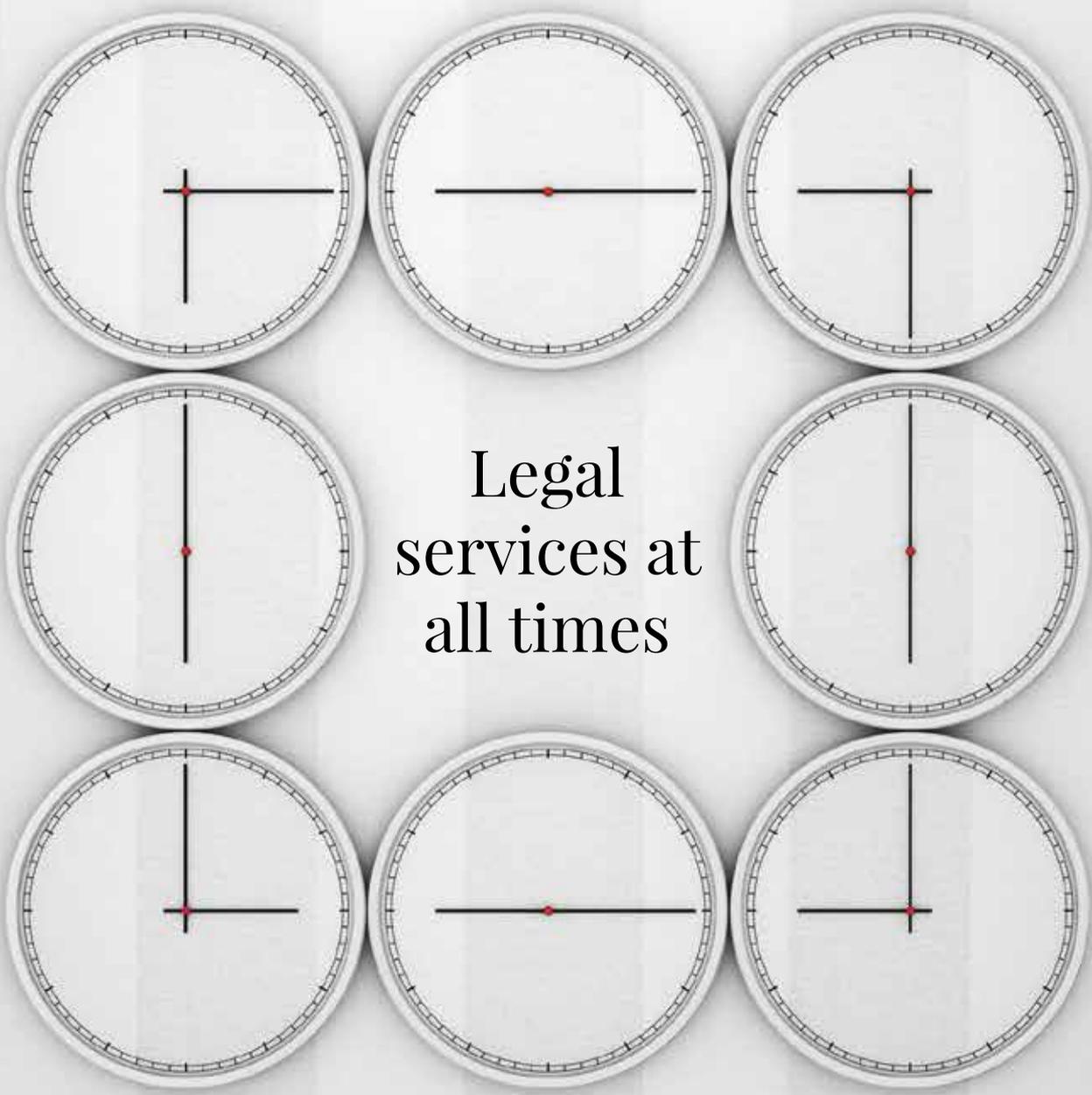
YEAR 7, ISSUE 10
NOVEMBER 2020

LEGAL MATTERS

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF THE NEWS AND NEWSMAKERS THAT SHAPE
EUROPE'S EMERGING LEGAL MARKETS



Guest Editorial by Kevin-Paul Deveau of Reed Smith ■ Across the Wire: Deals and Cases in CEE ■ Featured Deals
On the Move: New Firms and Practices ■ The Buzz in CEE ■ Centering CEE: Interview with Reed Smith's Dedicated CEE/SEE Group
Expat on the (English) Market: Pawel Szaja of Shearman & Sterling ■ Expat(s) on the Market: An Update
Connected to CEE: Interview with Slaughter and May's Dedicated CEE Partner Group
After the Gold Rush: What Causes and Comes After an International Law Firm's Departure from a CEE Market
ILFs in CEE: What's the Deal?



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EDITORIAL: LOOKING WEST ACROSS THE POND

By David Stuckey

England – particularly English law firms, English lawyers, and English law – plays an outsized role in CEE’s legal markets.

English law firms were among the first international providers of legal services to establish footprints in CEE after the end of communism, and the level of quality they were able to offer clients in CEE (as well as those investing in the region from outside) quickly became the standard in the region. Domestic firms were required, in short order, to learn, improve, and adapt to those standards.

English lawyers were the flag carriers for those standards, providing personal assurances of competence and quality, and bringing to bear their first-hand experience with the most sophisticated M&A and financing procedures, as well as the kind of enlightened, commercially-minded, problem-solving client service the rapidly developing region required.

English law, both because of its centuries of refinement and its universal acceptance as an acceptable common denominator across cultures, is also commonly relied upon by contracting parties in CEE, whether for M&A or for financing deals.

We at CEE Legal Matters are extremely familiar with English lawyers and law firms. Indeed, the CEE Legal Matters’ 2020 Dealer’s Choice International Law Firm Summit and annual Deal of the Year Awards Banquet were scheduled for London specifically to help bring local CEE firms and their London-based counterparts together, and while the ongoing (and worsening) COVID-19 crisis forced the cancellation of those events, we’re going to try again next year (June 3d, 2021 – mark it down).

Thus, this, our third special issue dedicated to a particular market in three years – following China in 2018 and South Africa in 2019 – is focused on English lawyers and law firms. We have reached out to all the English lawyers we’ve interviewed over the years for an update from them, and added a special

Expat on the Market this time with Pawel Szaja of Shearman & Sterling – a Polish lawyer at an international firm in London. We have a special report on the process of arrival and withdrawal for London-based law firms establishing (and then closing) offices in CEE, and the extent to which they maintain special relationships with the offices they left behind. We invited all the international law firms working in the region to highlight their most significant deals in the past five years, and we invited the sponsor of the 2020 Dealer’s Choice conference (Slaughter and May) and the 2021 Dealer’s Choice conference (Reed Smith) to tell us a bit about their CEE practices.



There is, in fact, a lot of news coming from us that we’re very excited about. In addition to an upcoming formal announcement about next year’s big conference in London (contact us for sponsorship details), by the time this issue is on your desk we will have started beta testing a brand-new product, which, when formally introduced in December, has the potential of – well, let’s not say “revolutionizing” the market, but at least making a significant impact on it. You’ll be seeing more in coming weeks.

Also, you may have noticed our expansion in recent months as well. From our new and extremely popular Comparative Guides, to the new CEE In-House Legal Matters magazine and website ... we’re still growing, still expanding, still thinking about ways to make our products, reporting, and services more useful to our readers. So you should definitely check out our new products, contact us for more details, and stay tuned for more announcements and information.

In the meantime, you should enjoy this Special Issue of the CEE Legal Matters magazine.

Written, not coincidentally, in English.



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If you like what you read in these pages (or even if you don’t) we really do want to hear from you. Please send any comments, criticisms, questions, or ideas to us at:
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GUEST EDITORIAL: THE (CONTINUED) IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH LAW FOR CEE

By Kevin-Paul A. Deveau, Partner, Reed Smith



On January 20, 2010, I stepped off a plane in Bucharest to start a secondment at Clifford Chance's local office, which was supposed to last eighteen to twenty-four months. I was a young and eager lawyer, keen for new experiences and ready for the challenge of working in emerging markets. In the end, I left nearly three and a half

years later, and I almost stayed on permanently in Bucharest. It was an amazing experience, and English law in CEE has had a massive impact on my life.

But a lot has changed in the ten years since I arrived in Bucharest. Back then, the financial crisis was still working its way through the global economy, and the regional legal market was dominated by Magic Circle and Silver Circle firms, together with national and regional firms and a mix of US law firms.

Since then, we have had – naming only a few monumental events during the last decade – the Eurozone crisis, the Ukrainian revolution, sanctions against Russia, Brexit, and COVID-19. In these times of change and disruption, the legal market has shifted drastically. US firms have arrived in London, France, and Germany in force, having a massive impact on compensation and profitability expectations. Law firm mergers have led to cross-border behemoths, with some having more than 5000 lawyers around the world. And client expectations on cost and delivery in an era of ever-increasing automation and speed of communication have shifted.

In this context, the role of English law in CEE has remained strong. English law remains a far more common choice of law for cross-border transactions, particularly in CEE, than any other option. It is particularly popular with inbound/outbound investment and lending, where the parties do not want one side to have a “home field” advantage. This position has been reinforced by the development of English case law in the last decade. Time after time after time, the courts have articulated principles – binding at common law in a way they would not be in a civil law jurisdiction – which encourage the sensible interpretation of contractual obligations by reference to the reasonable expectations of the parties. The English courts have demonstrated a serious commitment to reasonableness,

in a way which should give confidence in the sensibility of the English courts and English law.

This important standing of the English courts and English law came under some pressure with Brexit, but in my view, it has passed that test. The UK Supreme Court had a decisive impact on the approach of the UK Government to Brexit. Its role in the process reinforced the sound approach of the judiciary in the UK, notwithstanding certain tabloid hysterics. And whatever happens with the end of the transition period, English law will continue to be available as a safe harbour, just as New York law has been used around the world for decades without any of the arrangements tied to membership of the European Union.

The role of English law and English law firms in CEE and elsewhere will, however, continue to evolve. We have seen the emergence of strong local markets, where deals are increasingly being dominated by local plays. A large loan from a Polish bank to a Polish borrower is more common nowadays, and in that context, English law and English language documents make less sense. At the same time, local borrowers have more sophisticated and more international. They are accessing international capital and doing deals in ways which we did not see before. And, when (for example) the Polish bond market seized up, we saw a sustained uptick in Polish companies seeking finance from sources other than Polish banks, including non-bank lenders with a strong preference for English law.

In this context, law firms have had to reassess their business and staffing. What gets done in London? Do lawyers need to sit physically in the region? Or can it all be done from London or a regional hub? And one issue looms over the entire industry - profitability. Clients are increasingly sophisticated consumers of legal services. Can everything be done by a global law firm with a single profit model? Or does it make sense to have a broader mix of international, regional, and national law firms? Back in 2010, the legal market was driven in many respects by international law firms driving into local markets, but I am not sure that will continue. We - as an industry - are still trying to work our way through that. What is clear, however, is that the world and CEE look a lot different than in 2010, but the new circumstances present opportunity. ■

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ACROSS THE WIRE: FEATURED DEALS



Latvia: Cobalt Advises Capital300 and Chalfen Ventures on Investment into Lokalise

Cobalt has advised Capital300 and Chalfen Ventures on a EUR 5 million series A investment into Riga-based startup Lokalise.

Founded in 2017, Lokalise is a Latvian startup that focuses on translation and localization of apps, websites, games and more.

"The Investment in Lokalise was important not just for the company and investors, but the whole Latvian start-up scene. It repeatedly indicated that Latvian start-ups can be attractive to serious investors outside the Baltics and are they ready to conquer global markets. Cobalt was glad to be part of this transaction."

- Indrikis Liepa, Cobalt Latvia Partner

Cobalt's team included Partner Indrikis Liepa, Senior Associate Diana Zepa, and Associates Agnese Gerharde and Ivo Maskalans. ■

Czech Republic: Dentons Advises CPI Property Group on New Hybrid Issue and Tender Offer

Dentons has advised CPI Property Group on a successful tender offer and the issue of EUR 525 million 4.875% undated subordinated notes callable in November 2026.

The notes – which Dentons refers to as “the New Hybrids” – were issued under CPIPG's EUR 8 billion Euro Medium Term Note Programme and received significant investor interest, with nearly EUR 1 billion of demand. Proceeds from the New Hybrids are primarily intended for extending CPIPG's refinancing profile and further reducing gross debt.

On September 8, 2020, CPIPG announced tender offers targeting its EUR 550 million 4.375% undated subordinated notes callable in 2023 (the “2023 Hybrids”) and EUR 347 million 1.45% senior notes due 2022 (the “2022 Notes”).

On September 17, 2020, EUR 28 million of the 2023 Hybrids and EUR 12 million of the 2022 Notes were accepted in the tender offer. In total during 2020, CPIPG has repaid more than EUR 1.2 billion of senior unsecured bonds, Schuldschein, and hybrid bonds in advance of the scheduled maturity or call dates. ■



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Romania: MPR Partners Advises Belgium's Interparking on Expansion of Parking Locations Portfolio in Romania

MPR Partners has advised Interparking on its acquisition of the Bucur Obor Parking building in Bucharest from Parcaj Subteran Bucur Obor.

The Interparking Group is present in nine countries and over 360 cities. It currently owns 783 units with over 360,000 parking spots across Europe, and in Romania, Interparking owns five parking locations: four in Bucharest, and one in Timisoara.

MPR Partners' team consisted of Partner Dana Radulescu, Senior Associate Daniel Alexie, and Associate Diana Borcean. ■

schönherr

Austria, Slovenia: Schoenherr Advises on Sartorius' Acquisition of BIA Separations

Schoenherr has advised the unidentified majority shareholder on the sale of BIA Separations to the Sartorius Group and its merger into the Sartorius Stedim Biotech subgroup.

The transaction has a total value of EUR 360 million, of which EUR 240 million will be paid in cash and EUR 120 million in Sartorius Stedim Biotech shares. Additionally, three tranches of earn-out payments based on performance over the next five calendar years were agreed. The acquisition is subject to customary closing conditions and is expected to close by the end of 2020.

BIA Separations develops and manufactures products for the purification and analysis of large biomolecules such as viruses, plasmids, and mRNA, which are used in cell and gene therapies and other advanced therapies.

The Sartorius Group has been described as "a leading international partner of biopharmaceutical research and the industry." In fiscal 2019, the group generated approximately EUR 1.83 billion in revenue. It has around 9,000 employees at approximately 60 manufacturing and sales sites around the world.

Eisenberger & Herzog, Milbank, and Rojs, Peljhan, Prelesnik & Partners advised the Sartorius Group on the deal. ■

Ukraine: Redcliffe Partners Advises Hurma System on Financing from Pragmatech Ventures

Redcliffe Partners has advised Ukrainian HR tech product manufacturer Hurma System on seed financing from the European venture capital firm Pragmatech Ventures.

Hurma System is a Ukrainian start-up that specializes in the automation of HR and recruitment processes of businesses.

Pragmatech Ventures is a European venture fund that invests in early-stage B2B SaaS and Marketplace projects in the CEE region and focuses on start-ups in the field of Enterprise Software, prioritizing HR Tech, BioTech, Property Tech, and Sales & Marketing Tech. ■

Ukraine: Integrites Successful for Orlen Lietuva in Ukrainian Customs Dispute

Integrites has successfully defended Orlen Lietuva in a UAH 1.5 million dispute with the Zhytomyr office of the State Fiscal Service of Ukraine.

Orlen Lietuva is a refinery operator that supplies petrol and jet fuel to Ukraine and the Baltic states.

Integrites's team included Partner Viktoriya Fomenko and Senior Associate Kostiantyn Kharchenko. ■

Czech Republic: JSK and Noerr Advise on R22's Acquisition of Czech Communication Provider ProfiSMS

JSK has advised Poland's R22 Group on its acquisition by auction of a 100% stake in ProfiSMS s.r.o. and its two Czech fully-owned subsidiaries, Axima SMS Services s.r.o. and SMSbrana s.r.o., from Net Brokers Holding, which is owned by the Bauer Media Group. The sellers were represented by Noerr.

The R22 group technological companies focuses on scalable services offered on the basis of a subscription model and SaaS (Software as a Service).

ProfiSMS provides telecommunication services in the form of text messages for authentication and advertising purposes in the Czech and Slovak markets. It specializes in high-quality message delivery over direct operator connections and using alpha sender ID.

"It was a truly cross-border deal in a competitive auction process which entailed all elements and aspects which you may expect. We are excited to assist R22 with their entry into the Czech market and wish them all the best for the future."

- Tomas Dolezil,
Partner and Head of Corporate/M&A, JSK

JSK's team was led by Partner Tomas Dolezil and included Senior Associates Helena Hailichova and Hana Cislerova and Junior Lawyers Tomas Benes and Sebastian Speta.

Noerr's team included Partner Barbara Kusak and Senior Associate Michal Janicek. ■

ACROSS THE WIRE: DEALS SUMMARY

Date covered	Firms Involved	Deal/Litigation	Value	Country
21-Sep	Binder Groesswang	Binder Groesswang advised Austrian cryptocurrency service provider SmartBytes GmbH, operating as Coinpanion, on a pre-seed financing round.	N/A	Austria
22-Sep	Dorda; Eisenberger & Herzog	Dorda advised Patrizia AG on the acquisition of the Aira Tower residential project in Graz from Aira Development Group. Eisenberger & Herzog advised the Aira Development Group on the sale.	N/A	Austria
2-Oct	Schoenherr	Schoenherr advised Austrian fintech Bitpanda on a European Series A financing round that was led by Valar Ventures. Taylor Wessing advised Valar Ventures.	USD 52 million	Austria
6-Oct	Cerha Hempel; Schoenherr	Cerha Hempel advised OMV on the sale of its 51% stake in Gas Connect Austria GmbH to Verbund AG. Schoenherr advised Verbund on the sale.	EUR 271 million	Austria
9-Oct	Delphi; Schoenherr; SCWP Schindhelm	Schoenherr and Sweden's Delphi law firm advised AddLife on its acquisition of all shares in the DACH Medical Group Holding AG. The unidentified sellers were advised by SCWP Schindhelm.	N/A	Austria
15-Oct	Binder Groesswang; Bird & Bird	Binder Groesswang, working alongside lead counsel Bird & Bird, advised European investment fund Cube Infrastructure Fund II on the acquisition of a majority stake in Switzerland's Heliot Group.	N/A	Austria
30-Sep	Dentons	Dentons helped Austrian insurance group UNIQA and CherryHUB, its Hungarian InsurTech subsidiary, enter the German market.	N/A	Austria; Hungary
15-Oct	CMS; Wolf Theiss	CMS advised Green Source GmbH and its Solar Partners subsidiary on financing provided by Kommunalkredit Austria for the construction of power plants in Hungary. Wolf Theiss advised Kommunalkredit Austria.	EUR 66 million	Austria; Hungary; Slovakia
9-Oct	Eisenberger & Herzog; Milbank; Rojs, Peljhan, Prelesnik & Partners; Schoenherr	Eisenberger & Herzog, Milbank, and Rojs, Peljhan, Prelesnik & Partners advised the Sartorius Group on its acquisition of BIA Separations and its merger into its Sartorius Stedim Biotech subgroup. Schoenherr advised the unidentified majority shareholder of BIA Separations on the sale.	EUR 360 million	Austria; Slovenia
7-Oct	Sorainen	Sorainen advised Australia's Aristocrat Digital gambling machine manufacturer on an undisclosed investment in Belarusian game development studio Neskin Games.	N/A	Belarus
21-Sep	Djingov, Gouginski, Kyutchukov & Velichkov	Djingov, Gouginski, Kyutchukov & Velichkov advised OTP Bank and DSK Bank on financing provided to Minstroy Properties EOOD for the development of NV Tower, a high-rise office building in Sofia.	N/A	Bulgaria
22-Sep	Kinstellar	Kinstellar advised the EBRD on a EUR 40 million agreement with Raiffeisenbank Bulgaria.	EUR 40 million	Bulgaria
25-Sep	Djingov, Gouginski, Kyutchukov & Velichkov; Jordanov, Valkov & Partners	DGKV advised Dow Jones International on the execution of a lease agreement for the company's new office in Sofia. The lessor, T.I.M-X OOD, was advised by the Jordanov, Valkov & Partners law firm.	N/A	Bulgaria

Date covered	Firms Involved	Deal/Litigation	Value	Country
25-Sep	Djingov, Gouginski, Kyutchukov & Velichkov	DGKV advised Sitel Bulgaria on extending its lease and renegotiating certain lease provisions necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic.	N/A	Bulgaria
9-Oct	Clifford Chance; Djingov, Gouginski, Kyutchukov & Velichkov; Linklaters; Tsvetkova Bebov Komarevski	Tsvetkova Bebov Komarevski and Clifford Chance advised the Republic of Bulgaria on its dual tranche EUR 2.5 billion eurobond issuance. DGKV and Linklaters advised lead managers Citi, JP Morgan, BNP Paribas, and Unicredit.	EUR 2.5 billion	Bulgaria
15-Oct	CMS	CMS advised the Italian-Saudi Arabian Arkad Consortium on the amendment and supplement of a public procurement agreement for materials and equipment, investment design-phase detailed design, construction, and commissioning of the Balkan Stream gas pipeline project.	N/A	Bulgaria
28-Sep	Divjak Topic Bahtijarevic & Krka; Mamic Peric Reberski Rimac	DTB advised Interxion on its acquisition of Altus IT in Croatia. Mamic Peric Reberski Rimac advised Altus IT on the deal.	N/A	Croatia
9-Oct	CMS; Schoenherr	Schoenherr advised S Immo AG on the acquisition of the Zagrebtower office complex from CA Immobilien Anlagen AG. CMS advised the sellers on the deal.	N/A	Croatia
8-Oct	ODI Law; Praljak & Svic	ODI Law and Praljak & Svic advised Tokic, a Croatian auto parts retail chain, on the acquisition of all shares in Slovenian tire distribution company Bartog from private individuals Jasna Bartolj Kotar and Darija Bartolj Umek. The sellers were advised by solo practitioners Mihael Prcic and Janez Tekavc.	N/A	Croatia; Slovenia
17-Sep	Baker McKenzie; Pierstone	Pierstone advised the Prague-based Socialbakery social media marketing company on the sale of its global business to U.S.-based customer engagement company Astute. Baker McKenzie advised Astute on the deal.	N/A	Czech Republic
22-Sep	Kocian Solc Balastik	Kocian Solc Balastik helped the Walteran Company obtain a license from the Czech National Bank to operate an investment company.	N/A	Czech Republic
22-Sep	Kocian Solc Balastik	KSB advised the WY Group on its acquisition of Hosting90 System and Hosting Zdarma in the Czech Republic.	N/A	Czech Republic
24-Sep	Kinstellar; White & Case	Kinstellar advised Czech investment group Portiva and Micronix on its acquisition of the Central Kladno shopping center in the Czech town of Kladno from Crestyl. White & Case advised Crestyl on the deal.	CZK 2 billion	Czech Republic
24-Sep	Baker McKenzie; JSK; Urban & Hejduk	Baker McKenzie's Prague office advised Worldline SA/NV on its acquisition of a 53% of stake in Gopay. JSK and Urban & Hejduk advised the seller on the deal.	N/A	Czech Republic
25-Sep	Dentons	Dentons advised CPI Property Group on a successful tender offer and the issue of EUR 525 million 4.875% undated subordinated notes callable in November 2026.	EUR 525 million	Czech Republic
28-Sep	DLA Piper	DLA Piper advised Inven Capital on an unspecified investment in Sweden's Eliq AB.	N/A	Czech Republic
5-Oct	Kocian Solc Balastik	KSB advised Eligo on its acquisition of the Czech branch of Euroserum.	N/A	Czech Republic
6-Oct	Kocian Solc Balastik	KSB advised the Pilsen Public Transport Corporation on awarding a public contract to renovate the Slovany tram depot in the Czech city of Plzen.	CZK 1.7 billion	Czech Republic
9-Oct	Havel & Partners	Havel & Partners helped Czech software supplier eMan list its shares on the Start stock exchange.	CZK 45 million	Czech Republic
9-Oct	Havel & Partners	Havel & Partners advised Prazska Teplarenska on the spin-off of its assets into five successor companies.	N/A	Czech Republic

Date covered	Firms Involved	Deal/Litigation	Value	Country
9-Oct	BPV Braun Partners; Schoenherr; Setina Komendova & Partners	Schoenherr advised KB SmartSolutions on the acquisition of an almost 25% stake in Platebni Institute Roger from Echilon Capital. BPV Braun Partners advised Echilon Capital on the transaction, and Setina, Komendova & Partners advised Platebni Institute Roger's CEO Adam Soukal and CTO Tomas Slobodnik.	N/A	Czech Republic
13-Oct	JSK; Noerr	JSK advised Poland's R22 Group on its acquisition by auction of a 100% stake in ProfiSMS s.r.o. and its two Czech fully-owned subsidiaries, Axima SMS Services s.r.o. and SMSbrana s.r.o., from Net Brokers Holding. Noerr represented the sellers.	N/A	Czech Republic
13-Oct	Havel & Partners	Havel & Partners advised on the sale of the Czech special purpose vehicle that owns Prime Timesheet to Icelandic IT company Tempo Ehf.	N/A	Czech Republic
13-Oct	Havel & Partners	Havel & Partners advised Genesis Capital Growth on the acquisition of a 100% stake in Home Care Promedica, a home healthcare and social services provider in the Czech Republic.	N/A	Czech Republic
17-Sep	CMS; Schoenherr	Schoenherr advised Covivio on its lease of the Carlo IV hotel in Prague and the New York Palace and New York Residence hotels in Budapest to the NH Hotel Group. CMS advised the NH Hotel Group on the deal.	N/A	Czech Republic; Hungary
22-Sep	Castren & Snellman; DLK Legal; Havel & Partners; Kinstellar; Osborne Clarke; Sorainen	DLK Legal in Poland and Kinstellar in Hungary and the Czech Republic advised Infosys on its acquisition of GuideVision. Osborne Clarke, Sorainen, and Castren & Snellman also advised Infosys on the deal. Havel & Partners served as GuideVision's advisor in the Czech Republic.	EUR 30 million	Czech Republic; Hungary; Poland
2-Oct	Nove	The Nove Law Firm successfully represented the Political Party Financing Supervision Committee in a dispute with the Center Party of Estonia.	EUR 40,387	Estonia
6-Oct	Ellex (Raidla)	Ellex Raidla advised the LHV Group on the public offering of its EUR 25 million subordinated bonds.	EUR 85.3 million	Estonia
12-Oct	Cobalt	Cobalt successfully represented textile solutions supplier Protex Balti AS in a dispute with Amigtex, the vendor of Optitex software.	N/A	Estonia
13-Oct	Cobalt	Cobalt successfully represented Protex Balti in a dispute with Amigtex.	N/A	Estonia
9-Oct	Sorainen	Sorainen advised Infracapital and AMP Capital on the sale of their combined ownership interest in Adven, a provider of clean energy solutions across the Nordics and Baltics, to unnamed institutional investors.	N/A	Estonia; Latvia; Lithuania
23-Sep	Hogan Lovells; Kinstellar; Noerr	Noerr advised UniCredit on financing to South Korean real estate investment trust JR AMC for its acquisition of the Nordic Light Trio office building in Budapest from Skanska. Partos & Noblet – the Budapest office of Hogan Lovells – advised JR AMC on both the financing and the underlying acquisition, while Kinstellar advised Skanska.	N/A	Hungary
18-Sep	Cobalt	Cobalt advised capital300 and Chalfen Ventures on a EUR 5 million series A investment into Riga-based startup Lokalise.	EUR 5 million	Latvia
22-Sep	Ellex (Klavins)	Ellex Klavins helped Gulbenes Autobuss and Balvu Autotransports successfully contest a procurement award involving a regional passenger carriage in Latvia to the country's Procurement Monitoring Bureau.	N/A	Latvia
28-Sep	Actus Q; Cobalt	Cobalt advised Dithmarschen Baltic GmbH on its acquisition of 100% of Dan-Lat Invest and ODK & RB. Actus Q advised the sellers on the deal.	N/A	Latvia
30-Sep	Cobalt	Cobalt represented Latvia's Central Election Commission in proceedings before the Regional Administrative Court in Riga regarding the annulment of extraordinary elections to the Riga City Council.	N/A	Latvia

Date covered	Firms Involved	Deal/Litigation	Value	Country
13-Oct	Cobalt	Cobalt advised two natural persons in an administrative appeal of a decision of Latvia's Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs denying them residence permits due to non-compliance with the provisions of the Immigration Law.	N/A	Latvia
28-Sep	Ashurst; Debevoise & Plimpton; Dentons; Linklaters; Sorainen; TGS Baltic; Walless	Sorainen, Linklaters, and Ashurst advised Lithuania's state-owned Ignitis Group on its initial public offering and admission to the Vilnius and London stock exchanges. Walless and Dentons advised bookrunners Bank of America, JP Morgan, Morgan Stanley, Swedbank, and UBS on the offering. TGS Baltic and Debevoise & Plimpton advised GDR depositary Bank of New York Mellon.	N/A	Lithuania
30-Sep	Sorainen	Sorainen is representing 15min, a news website in Lithuania, in an appeal against a warning issued by Lithuania's State Consumer Rights Protection Authority commission.	N/A	Lithuania
2-Oct	TGS Baltic	TGS Baltic established a pro bono partnership with the Kazickas Family Foundation, an international non-profit organization that supports education, social welfare, technology, culture, and medicine projects in the United States of America, Lithuania, and Africa.	N/A	Lithuania
5-Oct	DLA Piper	DLA Piper advised Lithuania's Ignitis Group on its acquisition of a 5% stake in the Moray West wind farm project on the east coast of Great Britain currently under development by Ocean Winds, which was established earlier this year as a joint venture by French energy giants Engie and EDPR.	N/A	Lithuania
6-Oct	Walless	Walless advised Eastnine on the acquisition of an office property in central Vilnius.	EUR 20 million	Lithuania
8-Oct	Sorainen	Sorainen helped establish the Aid Fund for Business, which will invest public and private funds in enterprises affected by COVID-19.	N/A	Lithuania
12-Oct	Trinita (Trinita Jurex)	Trinita Jurex successfully represented Restaurants Group Fortas in a dispute with an unnamed insurance company.	N/A	Lithuania
14-Oct	Glimstedt	Glimstedt successfully represented Nigeria's Arik Air Limited in a cross-border debt collection enforcement case in the Kaunas Regional Court.	EUR 2 million	Lithuania
17-Sep	Clifford Chance; White & Case	White & Case advised Valmet on its acquisition of the PMP Group. Clifford Chance Warsaw advised the seller on the deal.	EUR 64 million	Poland
18-Sep	DLA Piper; Noerr	DLA Piper advised the founder of Top System, a flexible packaging company in the dairy industry in Poland, on the sale of an 80% stake to Switzerland's Aluflexpack. Noerr advised Aluflexpack on the deal.	N/A	Poland
21-Sep	Dentons; Greenberg Traurig	Greenberg Traurig advised Madison International Realty on its acquisition of an unspecified stake in Cavatina Office sp. z o.o., the owner of the Chmielna 89 office building in Warsaw, from Cavatina Holding S.A., as well as on its entry into a joint venture agreement with Cavatina Holding S.A. and the refinancing of the existing bank debt of Cavatina Office sp. z o.o. Dentons reportedly advised Cavatina Holding S.A. on the deal.	N/A	Poland
22-Sep	Jeantet; Nautadutih; Noerr	Noerr is advising the Schwarz Group on its intended takeover and potential entrance into a strategic partnership with the French Suez Group in the waste disposal and recycling business. NautaDutilh in Luxembourg and the Netherlands and Jeantet in France worked on the deal as well.	N/A	Poland
24-Sep	Dentons; DLA Piper	DLA Piper in Poland advised Elite Partners Capital on the acquisition of a warehouse in the Polish town of Mszczonow from P3 Logistic Parks. Dentons advised P3 Logistic Parks on the deal.	N/A	Poland
25-Sep	DLA Piper	DLA Piper helped Aerotunel obtain financing from Pekao bank for the construction of the Deepspot diving pool in the Polish town of Mszczonow, together with conference and hotel facilities. The BB law firm advised Pekao bank on the deal.	N/A	Poland

Date covered	Firms Involved	Deal/Litigation	Value	Country
28-Sep	Bredin Prat; Soltysinski Kawecki & Szlezak; White & Case	White & Case advised Play Communications and its shareholders, Novator and Olympia, on the EUR 2.2 billion sale of all of its shares to French telecommunication provider Iliad SA. Bredin Prat and Soltysinski, Kawecki & Szlezak advised the buyer on the deal.	EUR 2.2 billion	Poland
28-Sep	Clifford Chance; Gorzelnik Nentwig Ziebinski; Sorainen	Clifford Chance advised Sun Investment Group Polska on the sale of a 170 megawatt solar parks portfolio currently under development to Ignitis Renewables. Gorzelnik Nentwig Ziebinski and Sorainen advised the buyer on the deal.	N/A	Poland
30-Sep	Greenberg Traurig	Greenberg Traurig helped OTB Ventures launch a dedicated investment vehicle to support Europe's space technologies – the OTB Space Program I – backed by the European Investment Fund and the European Commission through the InnovFin for Equity program.	N/A	Poland
1-Oct	SMM Legal	SMM Legal advised PKN Orlen S.A. on its tender offer to buy the remaining shares in Energa S.A.	N/A	Poland
2-Oct	Dentons; Gorzelnik Nentwig Ziebinski	GNZ Legal advised WPM Mosty on a successful financing and refinancing deal with mBank for the construction of a 10 megawatt portfolio of photovoltaic projects. Dentons advised mBank.	N/A	Poland
5-Oct	Bird & Bird	Bird & Bird helped Santander Bank Polska implement the Salesforce CRM cloud-based system in Poland.	N/A	Poland
5-Oct	Ozog Tomczykowski; Soltysinski Kawecki & Szlezak	Soltysinski Kawecki & Szlezak advised Britain's Smart Pension Ltd on the takeover of an IT team from Smart Pension's contractor, Code & Pepper. The Ozog Tomczykowski law firm advised Code & Pepper.	N/A	Poland
6-Oct	Benvolor; Eversheds Sutherland; Malecki Legal; Soltysinski Kawecki & Szlezak	Eversheds Sutherland advised Cogito Capital Partners on its EUR 3.7 million Series A investment in digital healthcare provider HomeDoctor. Malecki Legal, Soltysinski Kawecki & Szlezak, and the Netherlands' Benvolor law firm advised HomeDoctor and its founders on the deal.	EUR 3.7 million	Poland
6-Oct	Grant Thornton; Studnicki, Pleszka, Cwiakalski, Gorski	SPCG advised the Vafo Group on its acquisition of 100% of the shares in Carry Pet Food. Grant Thornton advised the seller on the deal.	N/A	Poland
7-Oct	JDP	JDP advised Free Now, the owner and operator of a ride sharing app, on compliance matters related to the new set of regulations in Poland applicable to the ride share market.	N/A	Poland
8-Oct	JDP	JDP advised Trei Real Estate GmbH on a EUR 51 million loan it received for its Polish subsidiaries from pbb Deutsche Pfandbriefbank.	EUR 51 million	Poland
9-Oct	JDP	JDP assisted the Greenpack Group with the establishment of a legal and tax presence in Poland.	N/A	Poland
9-Oct	Gessel	Gessel advised the founders of R2G Polska on the sale of a block of shares to a subsidiary of the Abris CEE Mid-Market III LP fund, managed by Abris Capital Partners Ltd.	N/A	Poland
9-Oct	SMM Legal	SMM Legal advised Miedzynarodowe Targi Poznanski on its sale of a 5.5 hectare plot in the center of Poznan, Poland.	PLN 114.5 million	Poland
12-Oct	WKB Wiercinski Kwiecinski Baehr	Wiercinski, Kwiecinski, Baehr worked alongside lead counsel Osborne Clark in advising Giant Ventures on the Polish aspects of an unspecified investment in Airly sp. z o.o.	N/A	Poland
12-Oct	WKB Wiercinski Kwiecinski Baehr	Wiercinski, Kwiecinski, Baehr advised Baltic Green I sp. z o.o. on contractor selection for the Katy Wind Farm project in Poland.	N/A	Poland
12-Oct	Kochanski & Partners	Kochanski & Partners is representing Polish tennis player Katarzyna Kawa pro bono in her dispute against the International Tennis Federation and the French Tennis Federation.	N/A	Poland

Date covered	Firms Involved	Deal/Litigation	Value	Country
12-Oct	Act BSWW	Act BSWW advised Pracuj Ventures on the acquisition of a minority stake in Gamfi.	N/A	Poland
12-Oct	Allen & Overy; Clifford Chance	Clifford Chance advised mBank on a PLN 150 million loan to Polenergia for the VAT and costs of construction of the Kostomloty wind farm in Poland. Allen & Overy advised Polenergia on the deal.	PLN 150 million	Poland
13-Oct	Allen & Overy; Clifford Chance; Greenberg Traurig	Greenberg Traurig and Allen & Overy advised the global coordinators, joint bookrunners, and lead managers on Allegro.eu's IPO and the admission of Allegro shares to listing on the Warsaw Stock Exchange. Clifford Chance advised Allegro on the IPO.	PLN 9.2 billion	Poland
15-Oct	Studnicki, Pleszka, Cwiakalski, Gorski	SPCG represented a group of former shareholders of Merlin.pl S.A. in a dispute with Switalski & Synowie Sp. z o.o.	N/A	Poland
15-Oct	DWF; Norton Rose Fulbright	DWF advised Enertrag on the sale of the Dargikowo and Karlino windparks in Poland to Allianz Capital Partners. Norton Rose Fulbright advised Allianz Capital Partners on the deal.	N/A	Poland
12-Oct	Kochanski & Partners; Squire Patton Boggs	Kochanski & Partners and Squire Patton Boggs both claimed success in their representation of Poland's Muszynianka Spolka z Ograniczona Odpowiedzialnoscia and the Republic of Slovakia, respectively, in international arbitration initiated under the Agreement on the Protection and Promotion of Investments between the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Poland.	EUR 170 million	Poland; Slovakia
17-Sep	Glodeanu & Associates	Glodeanu & Partners advised Blue Rock Investments on the acquisition of two logistic centers in Bucharest from unspecified sellers.	N/A	Romania
22-Sep	CEE Attorneys	CEE Attorneys / Boanta, Gidei si Asociatii advised Romanian entrepreneur Andrei Cretu on the launch of the Pluria B2B platform.	N/A	Romania
22-Sep	Popovici Nitu Stoica & Asociatii	PNSA advised Burda Group on the sale of its business in Romania to an unspecified buyer.	N/A	Romania
24-Sep	Bondoc Si Asociatii	Bondoc & Asociatii advised Eviva Energy on the restructuring of an outstanding commercial debt owed to it by an unspecified renewable energy operator in Romania.	N/A	Romania
25-Sep	Filip & Company	Acting on behalf of Hidroelectrica, Filip & Co successfully persuaded the European Court of Justice to, in the firm's words, "confirm the free market status for all energy transactions by stating that imposing OPCOM as the sole transaction platform for producers is an unjustified restriction on the free movement of goods."	N/A	Romania
28-Sep	Tuca Zbarcea & Asociatii	Tuca Zbarcea & Asociatii advised the Clever Business Transilvania media group on its acquisition of Prima TV in Romania.	N/A	Romania
1-Oct	Suciu Popa	Suciu Popa successfully represented Grup Feroviar Roman in its request that a bankruptcy claim filed against its subsidiary Rovit SA be dismissed.	N/A	Romania
2-Oct	MPR Partners Maravela, Popescu & Asociatii	MPR Partners advised Interparking on its acquisition of the Bucur Obor Parking building in Bucharest from Parcaj Subteran Bucur Obor.	N/A	Romania
5-Oct	Noerr; Stratulat Albuлесcu; Taylor Wessing	Noerr advised Michael Jaffe, the insolvency administrator of Wirecard Sales International Holding GmbH, on the sale of all shares of its subsidiary Wirecard Romania SA to SIBS. Stratulat Albuлесcu and Taylor Wessing advised SIBS on the deal.	N/A	Romania
6-Oct	Popovici Nitu Stoica & Asociatii	PNSA advised Bico Industries and majority shareholder Mihai Birliba on the acquisition of a 30% stake in Bico by Roca Investments.	N/A	Romania
6-Oct	BPV Grigorescu Stefanica	BPV Grigorescu Stefanica advised the Hornbach Group on the development of a DIY mega-store in Oradea, Romania.	N/A	Romania

Date covered	Firms Involved	Deal/Litigation	Value	Country
6-Oct	Filip & Company; Nestor Nestor Diculescu Kingston Petersen; Popovici Nitu Stoica & Asociatii	Filip & Co advised BCR on its sale of equal 33.3% stakes in the CIT One armored car company to BRD Groupe Societe Generale and Raiffeisen Bank Romania. PNSA advised BRD Groupe Societe Generale on the deal, while NNDKP advised Raiffeisen Bank Romania.	N/A	Romania
7-Oct	Stratulat Albulescu	Stratulat Albulescu advised Bog'Art Residential on the acquisition of two land plots in Bucharest from OMV Petrom S.A.	N/A	Romania
9-Oct	Digital 2 Law; Stratulat Albulescu	Stratulat Albulescu advised GapMinder Venture Partners on an unspecified investment in Cartloop, an eCommerce conversational marketing platform start-up. Digital 2 Law advised Cartloop.	EUR 300,000	Romania
15-Oct	Tuca Zbarcea & Asociatii	Tuca Zbarcea & Asociatii helped founders Florin Maxim, Eugen Zbircea, and Daniel Nanboe launch Comarket, a B2B marketplace for the Romanian hospitality industry.	N/A	Romania
18-Sep	Hogan Lovells	Hogan Lovells advised Netflix on its partnership with Russia's National Media Group.	N/A	Russia
18-Sep	DLA Piper	DLA Piper advised Sberbank Investments on a secured mezzanine loan to Russia's Nizhny Novgorod Region and Prosveshcheniye Group for the construction of a training and educational center.	N/A	Russia
21-Sep	Debevoise; Rybalkin, Gortsunyan & Partners	Rybalkin, Gortsunyan & Partners, working with Debevoise & Plimpton and Henry King QC as part of PJSC Tatneft's legal team, successfully defended the right of Russian lawyers to claim attorney-client privilege in English court proceedings.	N/A	Russia
22-Sep	DLA Piper	DLA Piper advised the ADG group on the acquisition of Russian cinema operator Modern.	N/A	Russia
28-Sep	DLA Piper	DLA Piper advised VNV Global on its approximately USD 2 million investment in NaPopravku.	N/A	Russia
30-Sep	Egorov Puginsky Afanasiev & Partners	Egorov, Puginsky, Afanasiev & Partners helped aluminum producer Rusal register as a new resident of the Special Administrative Region on Oktyabrsky Island in the Kaliningrad region of Russia.	N/A	Russia
30-Sep	DLA Piper	DLA Piper been appointed as a legal partner to provide pro bono legal assistance to the Russian Chapter: the Russian hub for the global platform on climate change that operates under the auspices of the World Economic Forum's Climate Governance Initiative.	N/A	Russia
8-Oct	Eversheds Sutherland; Tomashevskaya & Partners	Eversheds Sutherland advised the Cherkizovo Group on its acquisition of Compas Foods LLC, a chicken processing facility in the Tula region of Russia that is a subsidiary of Cargill Inc. Tomashevskaya & Partners advised Cargill on the transaction.	N/A	Russia
15-Oct	Kachkin & Partners	Kachkin & Partners helped Russian general contractor STEP LLC reach a settlement with Pharmasintez-Nord JSC in a dispute regarding payment for work and related claims.	RUB 100 million	Russia
22-Sep	Freshfields; Kinstellar	Kinstellar advised E.ON on its acquisition of a 49% stake in electric utility Vyachodoslovenska Energetika Holding from the German's RWE. Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer advised the seller on the deal.	N/A	Slovakia
13-Oct	Erdem & Erdem	Erdem & Erdem advised the Sisecam Group on its acquisition of five Turkish companies: Anadolu Cam, Denizli Cam, Pasabahce, Soda Sanayii, and Trakya Cam.	N/A	Turkey
16-Sep	Baker Mckenzie	Baker McKenzie conducted legal due diligence for the State Property Fund of Ukraine related to its privatization of the Dnipro Hotel, which was sold at auction with a winning bid of UAH 1.111 billion.	UAH 1.111 billion	Ukraine

Date covered	Firms Involved	Deal/Litigation	Value	Country
18-Sep	Asters	Asters reached a settlement following an anti-dumping investigation concerning imports into Ukraine of hot rolled seamless steel pipes originating from the People's Republic of China.	N/A	Ukraine
21-Sep	Integrites	Integrites successfully defended Orlen Lietuva in a dispute with the Zhytomyr office of the State Fiscal Service of Ukraine.	UAH 1.5 million	Ukraine
22-Sep	Aequo; Dentons	Aequo advised Novus Ukraine on the acquisition of the Billa supermarket chain in Ukraine from the REWE Group. Dentons advised the seller on the deal.	N/A	Ukraine
23-Sep	Sayenko Kharenko	Sayenko Kharenko analyzed data protection regimes in the UK, Germany, California, Israel, and Turkey as part of a technical assistance project supported by Ukraine's Ministry of Digital Transformation and the USAID Competitive Economy Program in Ukraine.	N/A	Ukraine
24-Sep	Ilyashev & Partners	Ilyashev & Partners is defending Ukrainian trade and economic interests in a dispute between Ukraine and the EU relating to a temporary export ban on unprocessed timber.	N/A	Ukraine
1-Oct	Ilyashev & Partners	Ilyashev & Partners successfully defended the interests of Municipal Enterprise International Airport Kyiv and Master-Avia LLC in a dispute involving allegations that they had acted together to improperly restrict competition in the Kyiv airport's ground handling market.	N/A	Ukraine
6-Oct	Esquires	Ukraine's Esquires law firm helped Skytrans LLC enforce a goods transportation agreement it had with an unidentified customer.	USD 85,000	Ukraine
8-Oct	Kinstellar	Kinstellar helped the Turkey Wealth Fund obtain merger control approval from the Antimonopoly Committee of Ukraine for the acquisition of a controlling interest in Turkcell Iletisim Hizmetleri A.S.	N/A	Ukraine
8-Oct	Arzinger	Arzinger assisted with Water Empire Ukraine's successful appeal of a decision of the Antimonopoly Committee of Ukraine involving the company's alleged market violations.	UAH 2.7 million	Ukraine
8-Oct	Arzinger	Arzinger advised the IFC on a loan to OTP Leasing in Ukraine.	USD 50 million	Ukraine
9-Oct	Sayenko Kharenko	Sayenko Kharenko advised the Power Construction Corporation of China, Ltd. on matters related to the construction of the 245.7 MW Syvash Wind Farm in Ukraine.	N/A	Ukraine
12-Oct	Redcliffe Partners	Redcliffe Partners advised Ukrainian HR tech product manufacturer Hurma System on seed financing from European venture capital firm Pragmatech Ventures.	N/A	Ukraine
13-Oct	Vasil Kisil & Partners	Vasil Kisil & Partners successfully represented the interests of the Rele construction company in a dispute with the Kyiv City Council over its failure to recognize Rele's transfer of the right to use land.	N/A	Ukraine
13-Oct	DLA Piper; Sayenko Kharenko	Sayenko Kharenko advised Myrwayton Holding Limited on its sale of an unspecified railway operator to Renaisco, a subsidiary of Glencore Agriculture. DLA Piper advised the buyer on the deal.	N/A	Ukraine



The Ticker:

■ Full information available at:
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 ■ Period Covered:
 September 16, 2020 - October 15, 2020

Did We Miss Something?

We're not perfect; we admit it. If something slipped past us, and if your firm has a deal, hire, promotion, or other piece of news you think we should cover, let us know. Write to us at: press@ceelm.com

ON THE MOVE: NEW HOMES AND FRIENDS

Serbia: JPM Establishes Criminal Law and Criminal Compliance Team

By David Stuckey

JPM has established a Criminal Law and Criminal Compliance team.

According to JPM, “scrutiny of state authorities of the business sector practices is resulting in the increased number of criminal investigations and prosecutions, launched in respect of both infractions and corporate offenses, that need to be addressed with proper legal counseling to avoid or minimize serious negative consequences. In anticipation of an increase of inquiries in the second half of 2020 in this area, JPM has established a three partner-strong Criminal Law and Criminal Compliance team.”

According to the firm, its Criminal Law and Criminal Compliance team’s specialization includes: (i) White Collar Crimes, including Anti-Money Laundering; (ii) Corporate and Competition Crimes; (iii) Tax Fraud; (iv) Custom Crime; (v) Corruption in Public Sector; (vi) Crimes committed by Public Officials; (vii) other Economic Crimes; (viii) Environmental Protection; (ix) Real Estate and Construction Crimes; and (x) Intellectual Property Crimes.

In addition, the firm reports, “our

best practice within Criminal Law and Criminal Compliance includes: (i) Risk assessment; (ii) Internal controls; (iii) Reporting of suspicions (iv) Defense in law enforcement bodies; and (v) Defense in criminal proceedings.”

Finally, the firm reports, “the Criminal Law and Criminal Compliance team also performs internal investigations where our experts conduct corporate internal investigations into the full scope of potential liability for clients who have reason to believe some wrongdoing may have taken place.” ■

Bulgaria, Turkey: Peterka & Partners Launches Turkish Desk

By Radu Cotarcea



Sofia-based Georgi Kanev has been appointed to lead Peterka & Partners’ newly-established

Turkish desk.

Kanev, a Senior Associate who serves as the Deputy Director for Bulgaria at the

firm, joined Peterka & Partners in 2017. Before that, he spent two years with Wolf Theiss.

Peterka & Partners reports that the desk already caters to several clients, including the Sarten Group, Turkish Airlines, the Yasar Group, and Zorlu Holding.

Ondrej Peterka, Founder and Managing Partner of Peterka & Partners, declared that “the creation of the Turkish Desk is the right response to the increasing importance of the Turkish economy and the natural interest of Turkish players in the CEE region to whom – as one firm – we provide integrated regional support.”

Kanev added: “I’m confident in the meaningful benefits for our clients and partners arising from this project. We are focused both on Turkish businesses currently operating in the CEE region or new market entrants, as well as on CEE companies expanding to Turkey. I’m convinced that, *inter alia*, our experience of working with Turkish clients and our well-established contacts with top tier Turkish law firms will allow us to develop strong and trustful relations with clients and partners interested in the services provided by our Turkish Desk.” ■

Lithuania: SPC Legal Takes Team from ZRG in Vilnius

By David Stuckey



Marius Rindinas

Former ZRG Law Firm Partner Marius Rindinas has brought a four-person team to SPC Legal

in Vilnius.

Rindinas joins SPC Legal as Associate Partner, and, the firm reports, he and former ZRG Associates Laurynas Puryls and Simona Sidaraviciene and Junior Associate Iveta Katiliute will “contribute extensive experience in issues of anti-money laundering, data protection, migration, betting and gambling, and others.”

“In our five years as a firm, we have been growing very rapidly and kept expanding our team of legal professionals, while constantly seeking and delivering new solutions that bring added value to our clients,” said Giedrius Murauskas, Managing Partner at SPC Legal. “This is especially true this autumn. We have just launched our new public procurement management solution, and we’re now happy to announce the joining of Marius Rindinas and his team, which expands our firm’s expertise and contributes services we were not able to provide before.”

“My colleagues and I are happy to join such a bold and up-and-coming team here at SPC Legal,” commented Rindinas, who spend the last four and a half year at ZRG. “Our expertise in areas of migration, anti-money laundering, and gambling as well as the synergy of

diverse experiences will allow SPC to offer its clients an even larger package of services, while also providing us with exciting new challenges.” ■

Russia: KIAP Starts Family and Inheritance Law Practice

By David Stuckey



Julia Yanygina

Russia’s KIAP Attorneys at Law has announced the launch of a Family and Inheritance Law

Practice.

According to KIAP, “the opening of a new direction is due to a significant increase of profile requests from current and new clients ... as well as the strengthening of expertise as a result of the successful implementation of a number of projects in this field.”

“As part of the Family Law area,” KIAP reports, “KIAP lawyers will provide clients with full support at the pre-trial stage of the process, negotiate and help to protect family assets, and, if necessary, represent their interests in courts of general jurisdiction in all types of disputes, including disputes over the division of jointly acquired property, and on the payment of alimony, determination of the place of residence for children and the communication procedure with them by one of the spouses, as well as on the establishment of paternity and divorce in court. Besides, KIAP lawyers will represent the clients’ interests in inheritance disputes, as well as advise on

the conclusion of a marriage contract or an agreement on the division of jointly acquired property, including common business.”

The practice will be led by Attorney Julia Yanygina, who, KIAP reports, has “over 20 years of practical experience in the field of litigation, including more than ten years in resolving family and inheritance disputes in court and at the pre-trial stage.” According to the firm, “in Julia’s practice, there are a number of high-profile cases related to the division of the spouses’ common property and the procedure for communicating with children. In addition, Julia specializes in pre-trial negotiations of the parties, mediation and marriage contracts.”

Yanygina graduated from the Finance faculty of Fadeev Yakutsk Financial College in 1995 and obtained her law degree in 2001 from Moscow State Open University.

“I am happy to lead the new practice and hope that my experience will be a good foundation for the development of a new direction,” Yanygina said. “Twenty years of experience has shown me that a well-structured negotiation process can help to resolve most issues without a trial. It is great that we have a common vision in this and other important issues, which means we are seeing eye to eye with KIAP, and so we have many important tasks and interesting projects ahead.”

“The necessity to set apart the practice of Family and Inheritance Law into an independent direction is due to a large number of ongoing requests from our clients with complex but very sensitive issues related to family, children, common property, and business,” commented KIAP Managing Partner Andrey Korelskiy. “In such matters, mediation

and the ability to build the negotiation process so as not to bring the case to court are always extremely important, and if the trial is inevitable, to provide qualified assistance, taking into account the interests of all parties as much as possible. We have all necessary capabilities for this – and now, when Julia joined us, it's time to set them into motion." ■

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania: Lithuania's Walless Merges with Derling Primus and Primus Derling in Latvia and Estonia

By David Stuckey

Walless of Lithuania, Derling Primus of Estonia, and Primus Derling of Latvia have agreed to form a pan-Baltic firm operating under the Walless brand.

According to a Walless press release, "a united Walless Baltic law firm will continue to provide top level legal service and seek to become the first choice for regional and international clients working in the Baltic states."

The new Walless will consist, the firm reports, "of 100 lawyers in Vilnius, Riga, Tallinn, and Tartu."

Walless was established by a group of partners who, in at the end of 2018, separated from Ellex Valiunas in Lithuania. The former Primus Derling (and now Walless Latvia) was launched in 2009, after a split of the then-largest Latvian law firm Loze, Grunte & Cers. First operating as Primus, since 2018 the firm has partnered with Estonia's Derling. Walless Estonia was founded as Derling in 2016, after separating from TGS Baltic. ■

Regional: SEE Legal Group Establishes Employment and Immigration and Intellectual Property Practice Groups

By David Stuckey



The SEE Legal law firm alliance has launched two new practice groups, one dedicated to

Employment and Immigration (headed by Kolcuoglu Demirkan Kocakli Counsel Maral Minasyan), and one dedicated to Intellectual Property (headed by Selih & Partnerji Partner Natasa Pipan Nahtigal).

Regarding the Employment and Immigration practice group, SEE Legal reports that its member firms "have a proven ability to handle high-profile cases on a national and international level, providing legal assistance in relation to individual and collective labor contracts, internal regulations and policies, confidentiality, restrictive covenants and non-compete agreements, management contracts, stock option plans, H&S rules and regulations, and DP issues that arise in an employment context." According to SEE Legal, the alliances clients "rely on its lawyers to help them attract and retain top local and international personnel through employment arrangements that comply with regional requirements."

According to new practice head Maral Minasyan, "I am proud to be chosen as coordinator of the SEE Legal's Employment and Immigration practice area. I will be the main regional contact for all aspects of the SEE Legal clients' em-

ployment and immigration related legal matters. As a part of the strong SEE Legal team, I look forward to continuing to create value for the group's clients."

Regarding the Intellectual Property group, SEE Legal reports that "based on the 53 IP lawyers spread over the 17 offices of the Group, and working together for over 17 years, SEE Legal offers an integrated IP-related service." According to the alliance, "since 2015, the SEE Legal IP Practice Group members [have as a group jointly attended] the Annual Meeting of the International Trademark Association. As part of its attendance, the IP Practice Group has organized various activities, including hosting meetings with representatives of national and international law firms that carry substantial weight in the IP world, meeting current and prospective international clients and providing them with SEE Legal value-added materials."

"I am honored to have been offered the position of Head of the SEE Legal IP Practice Group," commented Natasa Pipan Nahtigal. "I will be happy to coordinate our group of very established IP practitioners at a time when some of the fundamental IP principles are becoming so controversial and at the same time crucially important." In certain of our countries, compulsory licensing is being explored as a tool for combatting the current pandemic, and in others, we are following developments concerning the Unified Patent Court. We are investigating the patentability of computer-implemented solutions, questioning ourselves about the correct scope of trademark specifications and debating the EUIPO ruling against Banksy. These are just some of the very intriguing issues that I look forward to exploring with my SEE Legal colleagues to the benefit of our existing and new clients." ■

Poland: Baker McKenzie Launches Restructuring & Insolvency Practice in Warsaw

By Andrija Djonovic

Baker McKenzie's Warsaw office has launched a Restructuring & Insolvency Practice, co-led by Counsels Karol Czepukojc and Pawel Dlugoborski.

According to Baker McKenzie, “the new practice provides comprehensive legal advice to a wide range of players and stakeholders in restructuring and insolvency processes, in particular, companies, their directors and owners, creditors (financial and non-financial), investors in distressed assets, entities whose counter-parties are at risk of insolvency or have become insolvent, and all those who are considering available strategic options for such occurrences, including existing and new financings.”

“The emergence of this new practice fits perfectly with Baker McKenzie's strategy to offer our clients comprehensive assistance in finding the right answer to the challenges of the global economy,” commented Baker McKenzie Warsaw Managing Partner Piotr Rawski. “In these times, characterized not only by the COVID-19 pandemic but also by numerous international trade conflicts, it is essential that our clients can get through the crisis as smoothly as possible. Baker McKenzie, by developing its expertise in legal advice on restructuring and insolvency matters, is ready to help them to do so in Poland.”

According to Baker McKenzie, co-heads Czepukojc and Dlugoborski will be supported by “a team of more than 20 lawyers with unique expertise and experience in various aspects of restructuring and insolvency, derived from Baker McKenzie's leading practices on

the Polish market including Banking & Finance, Corporate, Mergers & Acquisitions, Dispute Resolution & Arbitration, Employment, Competition, Tax, and State Aid.” According to the firm, “the local team will also benefit from the extensive experience of Baker McKenzie's Global Restructuring & Insolvency Practice, combining it with in-depth knowledge of the Polish market.” ■

Serbia: Patricia Gannon Launches Gannon Advisory

By David Stuckey



Former Karanovic & Partners Partner Patricia Gannon has announced the establishment of

Gannon Advisory, which she describes as “a holistic strategic advisory business.”

Gannon was one of the Founding Partners of Karanovic Nikolic, now Karanovic & Partners, which, in the 25 years of its existence – and now with over 200 people – has become the largest regional firm in the former Yugoslavia.

In September, Karanovic & Partners announced that she and fellow Founding Partner Dejan Nikolic had left the firm.

According to a Gannon Advisory press release, “leveraging off her 20-year plus experience in leadership, management, business development, strategy, and the expansion of the practice in new

markets and new areas of law, many of her clients are in the legal sector where she advises on law firm management and a particular focus on women in law leadership skills.” In addition, according to the press release, “having worked at the European Commission in Brussels, a German law firm in Munich and at a top law firm in Dublin, she brings a level of internationalism and professionalism to this practice.”

Gannon is a founding member of the Serbian Private Equity Association and served as Chair of the European Forum of the International Bar Association, where she is now a member of the Advisory Board. She is also founder of the WE Angels network of women entrepreneurs supporting women-led businesses in the Balkans and the initiator of Here 4 Her, a movement designed to empower women through development of skills and networks.

According to the Gannon Advisory press release, “this new move will focus on broader advisory work in addition to legal advisory.” ■

Greece: KG Law Enters into Collaboration Agreement with ArtSecure

By Andrija Djonovic

Greece's KG Law Firm has entered into what it calls “a new, pioneering collaboration” with the ArtSecure boutique, which specializes in advising on art, intellectual property, and cultural property matters.

According to KG Law, “ArtSecure's practice encompasses a wide range of commercial, regulatory and contentious

issues dedicated to art law, cultural property and the art market in general. KG Law, [which covers] a broad range of fields related to art law, e.g., private wealth law, tax law, commercial law, and dispute resolution, can provide added value to the complex legal issues arising from art transactions and management.” According to the firm, “both firms have long appreciated the multi-disciplinary character and rapidly evolving trends in this particular area of law. Our combined expert knowledge from all related to art legal fields allows us to offer our clients a unique blend of expertise and market knowledge, providing a 360-degree service.”

The combined Art Law practice is led by KG Law’s Partner Theodore Raktintzis and ArtSecure’s Founder Phoebe Kouvelas. ■

Moldova, Romania: Mares & Mares Forms Alliance with Moldova’s Dolea & Co

By Andrija Djonovic

Romania’s Mares & Mares law firm and Moldova’s Dolea & Co have entered into a strategic alliance aimed at, according to Mares & Mares, “providing integrated legal services in Romania and the Republic of Moldova in the field of white-collar crime, investigations, international disputes, as well as commercial and investment arbitration.”

“In these areas, clients need assistance on the legal systems in two or more jurisdictions and our partnership distinguishes on the market through swifter and more flexible solutions, at the same quality standard on both Romanian and Moldavian legal matters,” said Mihai

Mares, Founding Partner of Mares & Mares. “Moreover, we have the resources and capabilities to adapt to any request, so that anyone, whether they are local entrepreneurs, multinational companies, or individuals, can benefit from the most appropriate defense strategies and a fair balance between two essential elements: cost and added value.”

Sorin Dolea, Founding Partner of Dolea & Co, agreed. “Considering Mihai’s involvement in some of the most sophisticated local and cross-border cases and our experience in arbitration,” he said, “including with a Magic Circle firm, this collaboration offers us considerable strengths: international exposure, integrated teams, qualitatively and functionally specialized exclusively in white-collar crime, litigation, and arbitration, access to best practices and cooperation with some of the best and most respected global alliances in the field.” ■

Ukraine: Danevych.Law Integrates into CMS

By Djordje Vesic

CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang has announced its merger with Ukraine’s Danevych.Law, with Danevych.Law’s Founding Partner Borys Danevych becoming Partner and Head of Life Sciences at CMS.

The merger will become effective on November 1, 2020, and Danevych.Law’s legal and administrative team, including Senior Associate Anastasiya Filipiuk, Associates Artem Grudinin and Anastasiya Mastruk, and Administrative Executive Iryna Tvardovska, will also be joining CMS.

“We are delighted to announce this strategic integration and to welcome Borys and his team



Borys Danevych

to the firm,” commented CMS Kyiv Managing Partner Graham Conlon. “With Life Sciences increasingly attracting the global spotlight, this important expansion of the team demonstrates our on-going commitment to delivering advice to our clients. The breadth and depth of Borys’s experience, along with the expert support of his committed team, will strengthen and expand our life sciences offering.”

Before establishing his own firm in 2012, Danevych spent ten years at the Paritet law firm. He received his Master’s degree from the University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy in 2006. According to CMS, “Borys brings more than 15 years of experience working with international pharmaceutical, biotech, research and development, and medical devices companies, as well as healthcare services and health technology organizations.”

“CMS has a very impressive global Life Sciences group and I see many opportunities to further develop our capabilities for clients in areas such as biotech, brand protection, and health tech,” said Borys Danevych. “I also see significant additional value in terms of being able to offer strong transactional, IP, Dispute Resolution, TMT, and Tax capability to our clients going forward. I am excited to join the firm – as are my colleagues from my previous firm. We look forward to working with the team both in Ukraine and across Europe.” ■

PARTNER MOVES

Date Covered	Name	Practice(s)	Moving From	Moving To	Country
22-Sep	Walter Poschl	Labor	Wolf Theiss	Taylor Wessing	Austria
6-Oct	Michael Mayr	Competition	Cleary Gottlieb	Cerha Hempel	Austria
2-Oct	Stepan Klecek	Corporate/M&A	Klecek Associates	BDO Legal	Czech Republic
21-Sep	Zygmantas Pacevicius	Litigation/Disputes	Sorainen	Cobalt	Lithuania
24-Sep	Marius Rindinas	White Collar Crime	ZRG	SPC Legal	Lithuania
15-Oct	Cristian Vlaicu	Banking/Finance	DLA Piper	Stratulat Albuлесcu	Romania
22-Sep	Sona Hankova	Real Estate	EY Law	CMS	Slovakia
18-Sep	Ahmet Bagci	Litigation/Disputes	Dirican Gozutok Bagci	GKC Partners	Turkey
15-Oct	Borys Danevych	Life Sciences	Danevych.Law	CMS	Ukraine

PARTNER APPOINTMENTS

Date Covered	Name	Practice(s)	Firm	Country
22-Sep	Indir Osmic	Energy/Natural Resources; Tax	CMS	Bosnia & Herzegovina
7-Oct	Nikolay Kolev	Corporate/M&A	Boyanov & Co.	Bulgaria
2-Oct	Valentas Mitrauskas	Litigation/Disputes	Motieka & Audzevicius	Lithuania
13-Oct	Marcin Sledzikowski	Corporate/M&A	SDZLegal Schindhelm	Poland
14-Oct	Rafal Kaminski	Capital Markets	White & Case	Poland
14-Oct	Maciej Zalewski	Corporate/M&A	White & Case	Poland
2-Oct	Raluca Rusu	Tax	Popovici Nitu Stoica & Asociatii	Romania
22-Sep	Oliver Werner	Corporate/M&A	CMS	Slovakia

IN-HOUSE MOVES AND APPOINTMENTS

Date Covered	Name	Moving From	Company/Firm	Country
7-Oct	Pavel Kovarik	ING Bank	Credendo	Czech Republic
23-Sep	Emese Szitasi	DLA Piper	MVM	Hungary
7-Oct	Jaroslaw Grzywinski	Warsaw Stock Exchange	Kochanski & Partners	Poland
13-Oct	Aleksy Miarkowski	Polish Ministry of Finance	SSW Pragmatic Solutions	Poland
25-Sep	Olga Gulyaeva	Bridgestone	Legrand	Russia
25-Sep	Fatma Ozen Karaca	Unlu & Co.	Master Destek	Turkey
5-Oct	Gamze Bedirkurum	KocSistem	Ericsson	Turkey
30-Sep	Oleg Samus	Graterra LLC	Sayenko Kharenko	Ukraine

THE BUZZ

In “The Buzz” we check in on experts on the legal industry across the 24 jurisdictions of Central and Eastern Europe for updates about professional, political, and legislative developments of significance. Because the interviews are carried out and published on the CEE Legal Matters website on a rolling basis, we’ve marked the dates on which the interviews were originally published.

Ukraine

Interview with Serhiy Piontkovsky of Baker McKenzie



Serhiy Piontkovsky

The ongoing conflict in the east of Ukraine that began in 2014 is not the only thing plaguing the country, according to Serhiy Piontkovsky, Partner at Baker McKenzie

in Kyiv, and Ukraine is continuing to struggle with corruption as well.

After the fall of the pro-Russian regime in the wake of the Euromaidan revolution, the independent National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine was established to tackle the issue of corruption in the country. Nonetheless, Piontkovsky reports, “there was recently a big setback in our fight against corruption.” According to him, “about a month ago the Constitutional Court of Ukraine decided that the appointment of the Chairman of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau was unconstitutional. The chairman was appointed by decree of the previous president, Petro Poroshenko.

Since there is no explicit provision in our constitution granting the president such a prerogative, the court concluded that the president had acted without authority in this matter.” According to Piontkovsky, “this decision represents a huge blow to the anti-corruption authorities in Ukraine.”

The instability of the Anti-Corruption Bureau has also been noticed by the International Monetary Fund, Piontkovsky says. “One of the major elements of Ukraine’s agreement with the fund is the reform of our anti-corruption sector.” As a result, he says, “because of the Constitutional Court’s decision, the whole arrangement with the IMF is at stake. It is unclear at this moment if the fund will continue to provide financing for our country.”

In other areas, Ukraine’s political system seems to be functioning well, though, and Piontkovsky says, “in a month or so, we will have municipal elections throughout Ukraine.” Unsurprisingly, he says, “the political campaign is well underway.”

In terms of legislation, Piontkovsky says that “there are several important updates worth mentioning. First of all, anti-BEPS measures will be added to

the Tax Code of Ukraine. In the future, every Ukrainian individual or legal entity which owns a Controlled Foreign Company will be required to declare its income. Should the annual turnover of said company exceed EUR 2 million, the owner in Ukraine will have to pay 18% Personal Income Tax and 1.5% military tax, even when no dividends were paid out.” According to him, “in order to facilitate this process, Ukraine has committed to join the Common Reporting Standard for Automatic Exchange of Information by the end of the year.”

“Another new part of our tax system under development is the Tax Amnesty Law, which is still in a draft version,” Piontkovsky says. “If the law gets passed, individuals doing business in the grey economy would be pardoned for tax offenses and would henceforth have to pay between 2.5-10% Personal Income Tax.” He’s aware this may not succeed, of course. “Historically speaking,” he says, “out of all countries which passed tax amnesty laws, only a few have been successful. There was some debate over the prudence of implementing such a law in our country, but people mostly perceive it as a positive thing.”

“Second, important changes were made concerning the regulation of farmland

ownership,” he continues. “The parliament recently lifted the ban on sale of agricultural land after more than twenty years. From July 2021, companies and individuals from Ukraine will be able to start acquiring land, but only up to 10,000 hectares.” He counts himself among the supporters of the new rule. “I believe this is a very good thing, since it will help develop agriculture business and attract domestic investments in the sector.” Even under this new rule, he says, “foreigners will still be banned from buying land in Ukraine.”

Recent legislative changes are aimed at

Hungary

Interview with Marton Horanyi of Baker McKenzie

Despite some political and legal debates between Hungary and the European Union, Baker McKenzie Partner Marton Horanyi, who also co-heads the firm’s Antitrust and Competition practice group in Hungary, says, “not much out of the ordinary” is going on, politically. “In fact, investors in Hungary appreciate that things have been rather stable now for the past few years.”

Horanyi says that COVID-19 is still the word of the day. “In the spring, Hungary implemented severe measures to curb the effects of the virus,” he says. This resulted in a special legal order, a so called “state of danger,” which was introduced in the spring, giving additional power to the Government. “The state of danger was lifted in June – without a hint that it would be reintroduced – and we are now in a state of ‘public health emergency,’” Horanyi reports. This state still allows the Government access to certain additional powers, albeit fewer

bringing money into and keeping more in Ukraine, and Piontkovsky points, as an interesting example, to the new Law on Gambling Business. “Back in 2009,” he says, “the Ukrainian government banned all gambling in Ukraine, which simply went underground. The new law is designed to legalize and strictly regulate the industry.” As a result, he says, “casinos will only be allowed in 5-star hotels, and gambling licenses – which will cost USD 10 million for a 5-year period – will be quite expensive.” Nonetheless, he says, “despite the restrictions, a number of foreign companies, including the Shangri-La Group, are eager to

than during the state of danger. “There are border restrictions in place and the Government can restrict the opening of businesses, regulate how institutions open, and what goes on in schools,” he says.

Horanyi says that “the Government is pouring money onto the market right now in an effort to not just help businesses survive, but also to incentivize investments in order to push the economy forward.” He notes that “it will be only in hindsight that we will be able to see the results of these measures.” Still, he says, barring severe consequences and unforeseeable complications, current indications “strongly support a bounce-back, despite the growth of our national debt.” He adds that his optimism stems from the fact that “in key industries there have been no massive layoffs, and although businesses are careful, many players are also looking for opportunities to grow.” At the time of writing, Hungary has over 30,000 active cases of the new coronavirus, with nearly 900 deaths.

Finally, Horanyi reports that, for him

invest in the sector.”

Despite the COVID-19 crisis, there are still some major deals in the pipeline. “The main two types of deals right now are concessions and privatizations,” Piontkovsky says. “The most important concession deals pertain to two port terminals – one in Mykolaiv and the other on the Black Sea. In addition, the state is in the process of privatizing several state-owned hotels and chemical and mining companies, as well as distilleries.” ■

By Djordje Vesic (October 2, 2020)

and his Anti-trust and Competition team at Baker McKenzie, “work has continued as normal – we are kept very busy.” He describes the new President of Hungary’s Competition Office, Csaba Rigo, who took over in the spring, as “very committed to further enhancing the effectiveness of the office.” According to him, “this is already visible and there is a lot of activity in terms of combating anticompetitive practices – cleaning the market of unfair behavior, false advertisements, and the like.” According to Horanyi, Rigo’s experience as the former President of the Hungarian Public Procurement Authority is reflected in his “vigor to step up against public procurement cartels as well,” and he says that this can “help a lot in cleaning up public tendering procedures.” ■



By Andrija Djonovic (October 8, 2020)

Slovenia

Interview with Andrej Kirm of Kirm Perpar



Andrej Kirm

According to Andrej Kirm, the Managing Partner of Ljubljana's Kirm Perpar law firm, things are going pretty well in Slovenia. "It's pretty much business as usual, apart from the

COVID-19 crisis," he says. Indeed, he says, while most larger transactions were put on hold from March to June, "now a lot of things are progressing, and we hope this will continue through the end of the year." According to him, "we are quite optimistic, and business is surviving better than we expected back in March.

As a result, the legal market is staying busy as well, he says, describing the last few months as "an atypically good summer." So good, he says, that "there was less vacation than usual." The market has stayed busy into the fall as well, he says, "so it's looking quite good." Still, he warns that this could change if more stringent measures are necessary to tackle the epidemic.

Slovenian courts are operating more or less as normal, Kirm reports, though he expresses some mild confusion at that very normality. "The courts are not using video-hearings as much as they could," he says, "and we're not sure

why." Kirm notes that the technology and enabling legislation has existed to conduct hearings by video for many years now, and some matters with foreign clients were conducted remotely over a decade ago – so it's not clear why courts remain, generally, reluctant to employ those tools now, during a crisis.

Instead, the courts have preferred to adapt to the demands of the pandemic primarily by limiting the number of people actively present at hearings as much as possible, and scheduling the hearings in the largest courtrooms available, "so there is as much distance between people as possible." Still, he says, "with the situation now – with COVID-19 cases increasing throughout Europe – I think the courts should accept videoconferencing as standard practice, as they have in Austria and several other EU countries. The Slovenian Bar Association is also supportive of this approach."

In the meantime, Slovenia's Parliament is staying busy, "and there are a lot of legislative changes being prepared," Kirm says, "particularly involving the epidemic." He draws special attention to the greatly-anticipated 5th Legislative Package of measures designed to address the fallout of the pandemic, and "especially those elements related to waiting for work – special measures for those employers who cannot provide work to employees (such as those in the hotels and tourism industry, passenger transport, and restaurants), and guaranteeing monthly basic income for entrepreneurs and micro businesses who have suffered most due to the implemented measures." According to Kirm,

previous measures "saved the year for these businesses" and he reports that the government "is planning on extending those measures, and possibly creating new ones." The 5th Legislative Package is expected to be available soon, he says.

In general, he commends the government's response to the pandemic, noting that "previous measures have been successful in keeping unemployment rates at quite a low rate." According to him, "we fully approve of this, and the government measures are going in the right direction."

In addition, Kirm points to eagerly awaited Corporate Law amendments (which he says should appear by the end of the year) designed to allow virtual shareholder meetings to take place when insufficient shareholders are able to appear in person.

Kirm describes this as a necessary improvement, which will "keep some projects happening" that otherwise would fall through the cracks as a result of difficulties in gathering sufficient shareholders together to approve them.

Overall, he says, the political situation is stable, with the next elections not scheduled for another year and a half, and there are "no signs that the government will change before then," as the business community is quite strong in supporting the economic measures it has taken so far. ■

By David Stuckey (October 15, 2020)

North Macedonia

Interview with Marija Filipovska of CMS

Like many countries in the region, 2020 was an election year in North Macedonia, and the recent formation of the country's new government, according to CMS Partner Marija Filipovska, "hopefully heralds a bit more stable of a period to come."

According to her, "the newly elected government is strongly pro-EU and is also very vocal in favoring Western investment" which she believes could "create a stable environment in which FDI can flow stronger if (the government) is doing their job."

Filipovska says that the predictions for negative growth in the country made by the World Bank, commonly put at around 4.1%, may be "a bit too optimistic," as the North Macedonian government has projected "a 4.4% drop." She says, "I'm afraid we will have to wait until 2021 to see what will happen – most predictions could be subject to rapid change depending on the course of the pandemic."

She adds that, although North Macedonia is not highly dependent on specific markets (as Greece or Croatia are dependent on tourism, for example), the economic impact of the pandemic is obvious. She also reports that in an effort to "hedge its bets" the new government has recently started "sending out messages of being open to different kinds

of investments, from different regions – including China and Asia." According to her, "it will be most interesting to see if the government continues to pursue this angle in the future, as such markets appear to be strong and have the tendency to grow."

Filipovska reports that there has been little new legislation recently beyond that related to the COVID-19 crisis. "We have had an update to our Data Protection Act," she says, "in an effort to emulate the GDPR, as well as some further fine-tuning to the renewable energy framework – but most of the changes and updates have either stopped or have severely slowed down due to the crisis."

Still, she says, a new Labor Law is in the pipeline, although it has "dragged on in certain legislative procedures far more than needed – likely due to the coronavirus as well."

Filipovska says that the past few years have seen more of "traditional investments and transactions." According to her, "we are closely following the banking system, as the EBRD has expressed the need for the consolidation of the banking market in their Transaction Report for 2018/2019."

Finally, Filipovska says that the North Macedonian market as a whole has "changed a little bit, in terms of trends over the last year," and she notes that "several large, global IT companies are expressing their interest in local software/IT companies and exploring the local IT market." According to her,

"this trend has not been very strong, but it has been remarkably consistent, even with (or helped by) the pandemic." This is good news, she believed. "We at CMS are very excited about this trend, as we have regionally developing teams, policies, and software for full support of IT companies and startups."



In addition, she says, there has been an increased interest in investing in and developing solar and wind energy. "North Macedonia is one of the countries in Europe that has the most sunshine hours per year and is also positioned geographically in such a way that it could use wind-power to a far greater extent than it does," she notes. "I'm very pleased to see that more interest has been expressed by foreign investors in this regard." ■

By Andrija Djonovic (October 16, 2020)

Lithuania

Interview with Robertas Ciocys of Ellex Valiunas



Robertas Ciocys

The situation in Lithuania is quite dynamic at the moment, says Robertas Ciocys, Partner at Ellex Valiunas, pointing both to the ongoing parliamentary elections and the

overspill of Belarusian IT companies into the country.

“Our elections consist of two rounds,” Ciocys explains. “In the first round, where we elect one half of the parliament, we vote for political parties, and in the second round we vote for individual politicians.” According to him, “the most important trait of our system is that you always have a coalition government. As a result it is more difficult for just one party to dominate the political

discourse.” As far as the results of this year’s elections are concerned, Ciocys says, “it seems we will have a change in our government and the center-right coalition will probably take over. That change seems to be welcomed by both the business sector and a large portion of our population.”

Despite the potential change in government, Ciocys does not expect Lithuania to depart from its strategy of attracting Belarusian IT companies to its market. Many Belarusian companies were prompted by the political unrest in their country to move their businesses to the Baltics or Ukraine, he says. “We are closer to them, geographically speaking,” he says, so “a number of companies are expected to relocate here, and our government is in the process of facilitating their move. Since they are coming from a non-EU country, we are trying to adapt our legislation in order to speed up the immigration process and facilitate the establishment of companies, and we are working to issue work permits for those companies.”

According to Ciocys, “Lithuania has been trying to position itself as a key regional partner to big companies for outsourcing accounting and IT work. Danske Bank is one of the examples. The current view is that, in comparison to the volume of work, there is a lack of IT specialists on the market. That could be changed with the influx of Belarusian companies.”

Apart from the booming IT sector, Ciocys says, most industries in Lithuania are experiencing the same problems they are elsewhere in Europe. But not all. “Some sectors have slowed down, but the pharmaceutical industry is very busy. Also, there is a view that, as a consequence of the COVID-19 crisis, a lot of the manufacturing will shift from China to Europe.” According to him, “states and companies do not want China as their sole supplier. As a result, they have begun approaching some of our manufacturers across different sectors, and we will see what that will bring us in the future.” ■

By Djordje Vesic (October 26, 2020)

Latvia

Interview with Valts Nerets of Sorainen

According to Valts Nerets, Partner at Sorainen in Latvia, recent municipal elections have resulted in a political change in the Latvian capital of Riga, while, on the national level, the Latvian legislature and government are trying to create a business-conducive environment, which has attracted new companies to the market, mainly from Belarus.

“We had remarkable municipal elections

in Riga recently,” commented Nerets. “The elections marked a quite significant change in the local government, because they ended the over-a-decade-long rule of the Social Democratic party ‘Harmony’ (‘Saskana’ in Latvian) – which had held power in Riga since 2009, and which is the main political representative of the Russian-speaking population of Latvia.” Nonetheless, Nerets insists, “the political situation in Riga is not settled yet, as, even though the elections happened almost two months ago, the new Mayor has only been appointed in the last few weeks.”

“In addition,” Nerets continues, “new members of the management boards have been appointed in many communal service enterprises. They levied allegations about corruption and embezzlement against former officials from the previous regime.” It is not yet clear if these allegations hold water, and



Valts Nerets

Nerets says that “whether the previous regime did everything according to law is still under evaluation.”

Despite the developments on the municipal level, Latvia’s parliament – the Saeima – has not been distracted from its ongoing mission to establish a new type of court in the country, Nerets says. “The idea is to create an Economic Affairs Court, which should be operational as of January 2021.” According to him, “the new court will consist of ten judges, elected for life by the parliament. The Court will deal with a wide array of areas, ranging from tax evasion, money laundering, and fraud cases, to civil and commercial cases valued at EUR 500,000 or more.” Another important role of the court, he says, will be “to

handle investment disputes.”

Many moves taken by the legislature and the government in Latvia are aimed at stimulating business. Nerets reports that “the government is trying to promote the country as an attractive location for foreign businesses. One way of doing so is through tax reform. The government is considering reducing the social tax, which should persuade new companies to open here.” Some have already taken an interest in moving to Latvia, he says, and he points out that “a significant number of Belarusian IT companies are looking to relocate here, due to the sensitive political situation in their country.”

Not all is well in Latvia, however, and the COVID-19 pandemic has taken its

toll on certain industries. “Hotels are closing down,” Nerets says, “and we still have to see how that industry will fare in the future.” There also seems to be a rise in hearings and trials, he says, in part because “the courts wouldn’t postpone hearings in the last couple of months, unlike at the beginning of the pandemic.” This is good for lawyers, it appears; he notes that “as a result, the legal market recovered somewhat in September.”

The only major change in Latvia’s legal market in recent months, Nerets says, is the merger between Walless and Primus Derling in Latvia, and Derling Primus in Estonia. “Other than that, there is not much else to report on,” he says. ■

By Djordje Vesic (October 26, 2020)

Bulgaria

Interview with Georgi Tzvetkov of Djingov, Gouginski, Kyutchukov & Velichkov

“Over the course of the past three months, Bulgaria has been in proper political turmoil,” reports Georgi Tzvetkov, Partner at Djingov, Gouginski, Kyutchukov & Velichkov. “The protests in the streets against the government and the Chief Prosecutor have been going on for almost 90 days – an unprecedented sight in Bulgaria.” According to him, the tensions between the Prime Minister and the President are “like nothing we’ve seen before.”

“The government continues to hold office, so we’ll see how it continues, but at this point in time, it’s really unprecedented,” Tzvetkov says. “Institutions are clashing and protestors are all over

the streets.” The protests, he says, are a consequence of “a general feeling among the populace that the ruling party, which has led the government for the better part of the past 12 years, has failed to battle corruption and distance itself from oligarchs – and this overall feeling of anger and being let down has culminated this summer.”

As a result, Tzvetkov says, the government’s recent legislative efforts have focused on “either curbing the effects of the pandemic or on garnering popular support – everything else of substance has been put on hold for the past two or three months.” Whatever its motives, he concedes that the government has been “doing an okay job in managing the crisis,” and that, despite a “sharp increase in numbers in the past few days, it has, overall, been good.” At the time of writing, Bulgaria has had a total of

45,461 cases of the new coronavirus, with 1197 deaths.

“Another effect of the pandemic is that most big-ticket deals are largely gone from the market,” Tzvetkov says, “although some large infrastructure projects have continued.” According to him, “the Balkan Stream gas pipeline, for example, saw several transactions completed over the past three months, with project financing being secured for some sections, and some procurement contracts have been awarded as well.” He adds that “concessions for the Sofia airport have closed recently” as well, and he describes the recent acquisition



Georgi Tzvetkov

of Bulgaria's telecom operator Vivacom as a "landmark transaction."

Overall, though, Tzvetkov says that the market has experienced a shift from big-ticket deals to smaller, mid-tier

sized deals. "The pandemic and political tensions have not affected the market greatly," he says. "The volume of work is more or less stable and businesses are on the lookout to seize all the opportunities the current situation might present

to them." Comparing this crisis to the economic crisis of 2007/2008, Tzvetkov says that "it is not as bad as it was back then, but we are yet to see how the pandemic will unfold in the autumn." ■

By Andrija Djonovic (October 30, 2020)

Austria

Interview with Marc Lager of Deloitte Legal



"Things are, right now, Covid-driven again, really," begins Partner Marc Lager, the head of the EU Competition Law and Global Trade practice in the Vienna office of

Deloitte Legal. "The numbers have been going up a bit lately, as in other parts of Europe, and there have been talks of reintroducing some of the measures that were in place earlier in the year."

Lager says that a new foreign investment review framework has been introduced, reflecting last year's introduction of EU FDI-Screening Regulation 2019/452, which established a European framework for the screening of foreign direct investments into the EU. The new law, he says, allows the authorities "to review a large number of transactions in a wide range of industries that could potentially leave key infrastructure points exposed to foreign investors, especially during these troubled times." He adds

that "Austria's Minister of Economic Affairs stated recently that some 100 transactions would fall under the scope of the new framework each year. Since a vast number of industries fall within the scope of the new framework and since the authorities can prohibit transactions to safeguard (national) 'security or public order,' the law is a public policy tool, so it's best to keep an eye on near-future developments."

Locally, Lager reports that Vienna has held its municipal elections. "These have gone by peacefully and in order," he reports, but says that "what I've found to be rather interesting is that one of Vienna's nine municipalities plans to introduce an investment incentivization scheme by supporting companies in exchange for temporary equity." Other than that, Lager says, nothing much has been going on – either in Vienna or in Austria in general – in terms of legislation that isn't directly Covid-related.

And on that subject, Austria's economy, like most in Europe, has not been spared by the fallout of the pandemic. "Personally, I hope that the overall economy will bounce back next year, but I must admit that it is quite difficult to predict anything at this point," Lager says. On the one hand, he says, "there

has been speculation by local experts that governmental support to distressed sectors will be severely strained by the end of the year and that mass lay-offs could follow." On the other hand, he says, information coming from EU experts has been "more positive, with more optimistic predictions."

The effects of the pandemic have been felt in the legal sector as well, Lager says. "We have been lucky since we [at Deloitte Legal] are a growing practice. But some firms have taken advantage of the shortened work time scheme that the government introduced earlier this year to stimulate businesses not to fire people by subsidizing a portion of their salaries."

Lager says that, in general, various types of state aid have been "more present in client requests," and he believes that, going forward, this may be a more active practice. "Businesses will want to know what happens when they acquire a company that has previously received some form of state aid, what their potential obligations and exposures might be," he says. "With the pandemic still going on – this seems likely to be a hot topic in the future." ■

By Andrija Djonovic (October 30, 2020)



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CENTERING CEE

An Interview with Partners **Panos Katsambas**, **Claude Brown**, and **Kevin-Paul Deveau** from **Reed Smith's** Dedicated CEE/SEE Group.

By **David Stuckey**



CEELM: Please tell us about the CEE/SEE Group at Reed Smith. How does the firm cover the region?

Panos: It is a combination of practitioners who have links to specific countries, either by virtue of being lawyers coming from such countries or by developing relationships with clients from past mandates or through local law firms. There isn't one model, but we have country-specific business teams that combine these approaches to further develop our business. In addition, we have local offices in Kazakhstan and Athens that help us with respect to these (and to a certain extent, some neighboring) jurisdictions.

Claude: As Panos notes, we have a broad network, developed either through clients and law firms or through personal connections. We have a number of country-specific teams for most parts of the world, but for CEE, we have developed a regional team as we find that it fits our clients' needs best. Frequently, we are instructed on cross-border deals in the region which involve several jurisdictions, and this fits well with our regional approach. We often find that law firms in the region operate a similar approach, and this makes collaboration much easier.

Kevin-Paul: I think that's entirely right. I have personal connections in the region

– I lived in Bucharest on secondment with a Magic Circle firm for three and a half years; my family is Polish; and I have close relationships with bankers, borrowers, and law firms in the region – which make CEE very central and important to my daily life and outlook. That experience and those relationships feed into every aspect of my practice, whether it's introducing local borrowers to London-based lenders or explaining local issues and circumstances to people who are new to the region. At this point, it all happens organically, even though I am based in London.

CEELM: How does CEE fit into the firm's overall strategy?

Panos: Reed Smith is a global law firm, and this is how we think about our long-term strategy. I know that “global” is a term that gets used a lot, but it is at the heart of what we do, where our firm is focused, and where we see ourselves growing. We have clients who are properly *global* and who are jurisdiction-agnostic or (at least) less jurisdictionally sensitive than they used to be.

It is critical to our business and our strategy that we support our clients, regardless of where they happen to make a particular investment or do a particular deal, with all the discipline and high standards they have come to expect from us.

“Where our clients see good opportunities, we need to be ready to help them. Where they haven’t yet seen good opportunities, we will do our best to find them and bring them to our clients. The number of times that I have said to a client, ‘you can invest in Poland, right?’

It’s a role that is part follower, part evangelist.”

It would make no business sense for the firm to have strategic clients and for us not to move side-by-side with them into Poland, or Hungary, or any other country in the region. And to do that, we need to know how to do deals in those jurisdictions. Being global also means that you are able to introduce clients from CEE (and other) jurisdictions to the firm’s global platform and have them follow you and work with you

when they work on deals requiring US or English law (for example) expertise.

CEE is becoming more and more integrated with the broader European market, and we want to be at the center of that. Our London office lead deals, as a result of the dominance of English law in Europe, generally. Our German offices are constantly focused on supporting cross-border integration in Central Europe, whether that’s in supply chains or capital structures. And our Greek office acts as a hub for local investment and regional shipping.

We also, on occasion, work with local law firms, and we have developed a panel of extraordinary partners, to ensure we hit the ground running whenever our clients need localized support.

Claude: I would also add that you really can’t ignore CEE, whatever you choose to call it (not too long ago, the phrase “New Europe” was making the rounds). We do our best not to distinguish between CEE and the rest of Europe. The effect of the *acquis* – the body of law which comes with joining the EU – has meant that the story over the last 30 years has been one of convergence of legal regimes. That said, there are still enough differences to make local knowledge invaluable. Then there is the commercial angle – CEE countries often provide growth opportunities which are harder to come by in Western Europe and other traditional markets. Our clients are keenly aware of that fact, and we need to be in a position to support them as they expand in those markets.

Where our clients see good opportunities, we need to be ready to help them. Where they haven’t yet seen good opportunities, we will do our best to find them and bring them to our clients. The number of times that I have said to a

client, “you can invest in Poland, right?”

It’s a role that is part follower, part evangelist.

And then there are the trans-regional transactions, where you need to deploy mixed discipline and jurisdictional teams that understand not only the local market or markets but also see the bigger picture and understand the overarching goal. That’s where you almost have to put on a business advisor’s hat on and not only provide the best-in-class legal services but also align yourself with the client’s long-term business strategy and interests, proving that you are a real partner of theirs. While mature Western Europe markets may be quite similar, each CEE market still maintains a level of individualism, and that’s where a law firm can show its skills when it comes to applying a global perspective to a local deal. We pride ourselves in always being able to deliver that for our clients.

To summarize, CEE is a key market for us and will continue to be so, as we keep seeing fantastic opportunities, both now and in the medium- and long term.

Kevin-Paul: CEE has been and continues to be a very exciting area for doing business - the growth potential specific to emerging and emergent markets is still there, clients are open to new products and have sophisticated tastes, there’s fantastic technological savviness, and the labor force is skilled and competitive. This hasn’t changed and will continue to draw investors and see interesting deals. Our clients are global - which means our firm has to be too. We follow the markets in the region very closely and source potential areas of interest to our clients proactively. We have our ears to the ground and, by being involved in a significant number of transactions, we have a deep understanding



Panos Katsambas

but in a way which is not insensitive to conditions on the ground and local law requirements. We have to sit in the middle of competing interests and find a way to “get it done.”

Even during the pandemic, the region has signalled that it is still open for business and we have been working throughout the last six months on different transactions, in different jurisdictions.

It’s interesting. Five years ago, most private credit funds could not lend into CEE. They were restricted by the terms of their investment policies or limited partnership agreements. Lending into the US – fine. Western Europe – fine. CEE – nope! Well, those days are gone. Barely a week goes by where some new business in CEE isn’t looking for financing outside their home markets and outside traditional bank-driven structures. Importantly, our credit fund clients are now not only able to respond to those enquiries but actively seek them out.

CEELM: How does the firm promote and market its capabilities in the region?

Kevin-Paul: Our promotion and marketing efforts are primarily deal-driven. We properly and effectively execute each deal. Our clients are happy. Their investors are happy. The other parties are happy. The more deals you do in a specific jurisdiction, the more you build on that expertise and newcomers will want to work with someone who has been there before. It is critical to know who is who among the players in the country and to have navigated the jurisdiction-specific sensitive issues previously.

Separately, having a network of local firms presents us with opportunities that we can share with clients and either open new relationships or show that we

are on the pulse of local market activity.

CEELM: Do you have best friends you work within the region?

Claude: Over the years our team has built up an enviable range of friends in the CEE, who not only allow us to have a point of contact in every country in the region but also offer us a complete suite of specialisms. This allows us to cover every corner of a deal and work of cross-border deals. Knowing people for years – and them knowing us – engenders trust and confidence. You know they will go the extra mile (or kilometer), and they know that you know what you are doing. In some cases, the firms we know have built their own regional networks and that can really help the bigger multi-jurisdictional deals along. It also means that they can offer us their network expertise in jurisdictions where we may not traditionally have had extensive contacts. In other deals, our friends in the region offer us deep specialist knowledge in key disciplines, be they cybersecurity, IP, derivatives – or whatever. It is highly satisfying when a client calls saying that they have an urgent and complex problem within the Czech interbank payment system, and you can say, “I know a lawyer who knows the CERTIS system inside out. Let’s call him now.”

CEELM: Which specific deals in the region that you’ve worked on did you find most interesting/significant??

Panos: Advising Invel Real Estate in its acquisition of NBG Pangaea REIC (now Prodea Investments), which at the end of 2013 was the largest real estate deal in Greece. More importantly, however, staying with the client throughout the subsequent seven-year period, facing a significant Greek financial crisis and seeing through a successful exit of the



Claude Brown



Kevin-Paul Deveau

not only of the bigger picture but also of the so-called “nitty-gritty,” which can, so many times, make the difference when it comes to doing business.

When our clients do a deal in Poland, or Hungary, or Romania, they want to do it to their standards, with all the bells and whistles they have come to expect from a well-negotiated and well-executed deal,

initial investors, a recapitalization of the acquisition vehicle, and the buy-out of the remaining stake of NBG in the business. Aside from a very successful lawyer-client relationship, we faced and overcome numerous legal and commercial issues in ways that only an international counsel with local market expertise could help its client navigate.

Claude: Perhaps I am a bit of geek (or just sad), but I really find getting into the plumbing infrastructure of the regions financial markets makes for the most interesting transactions. After the collapse of Lehman in the financial crisis in 2008, we worked on a project for a broker/dealer client which needed to know how long its securities or cash could be locked up in the settlement systems in the region, if one of its counterparties became insolvent. For that sort of project, you not only need financial markets lawyers in the region who know their law but who also know the practical aspects of securities trading.

Kevin-Paul: If Claude is a bit of a geek, I am maybe a bit of a romantic. I really enjoy doing real estate finance and project finance transactions. They produce jobs for the local market. They change lives. They change economies. I still remember negotiating a deal for an anchored shopping mall in the region. It was built in a town that I knew very well. Prior to its construction, people used to drive hours to a neighboring city to get certain items. Then, one day, that all changed. So much more was immediately available to the people of that town. And it changed living standards and the local economy. When a manufacturing plant gets built, or a wind farm, or a highway, where there wasn't one before, it is so much more concrete in terms of visible and identifiable benefits for other people than on some other

kinds of transactions.

CEELM: Do you have any good war stories you can share with us about work in CEE?

Claude: At the start of the pandemic, I received a call from the GC of a client which specializes in outsourcing work and for which I have done finance transactions for over ten years. They needed urgent advice on the furlough and short work schemes, as well as emergency employment protection laws in six countries within the CEE. Within an afternoon, we had the best team of regional employment lawyers lined up to provide that advice, even though some governments were still writing the emergency decrees. Working with our employment lawyers, the regional task force that we had assembled delivered the collated advice overnight, allowing the GC to brief the Board by lunchtime.

On one deal, a regional bank was granting security over collateral for a derivatives trade. We ran the usual searches at Companies House to see if it had a registered establishment in the UK and the searches came back showing a nil return. Where a company is incorporated in or has an establishment in the UK, you have to register the collateral with Companies House, but otherwise, no registration is required. Fortunately, we had a very diligent trainee who also decided to Google the bank and discovered that a local "branch" of the bank was a member of the chamber of commerce in a small market town in Buckinghamshire. It turned out that, for some reason best known to himself, a bank employee had decided to designate his UK house as a branch of the bank and had joined the local chamber of commerce. Fortunately, we were still within the time limits for registering the security but there were some interesting

phone calls with Companies House.

Panos: We closed a deal this March with simultaneous local closings in Greece, Italy, and Spain (not 100% CEE) while all three countries in strict lockdown and needing local notaries to be present for the closing to be effected. That was a learning experience and process!

Kevin-Paul: Perhaps one of my most memorable war stories was a deal that I closed in CEE. We were given one week's notice to close an acquisition with a rollover of the existing financing. The lawyers flew in from London on the Monday, and we sat for three days, high-up in an office building, negotiating day and night. The negotiations got tense, and they were broken off midday on Thursday. At 11.00 pm, we got called back to the meeting room, and the purchaser effectively said that we weren't to leave the room until the deal was done. We finished at 10:30 am the next day. Everyone was tired. No one had slept much that week, particularly the lawyers who had to manage other transactions and email flow in the middle of the night. When we finished the deal, one of the clients stood up, looked at his lawyer and said, "Right. When can we have the facility agreement? 1.00 pm?" The lawyer's face just dropped. It was clearly impossible to turn the document in less than ten hours of work, and he hadn't slept. I tried to jump in, "I think it will take a bit longer than that, and I suspect we could use a bit of sleep first. It is important we get the next turn right." That didn't go over well. The lawyer agreed (under duress) to get the document out later that day, and we were all allowed to leave the room at that point. In the end, I received the draft the following Monday (i.e., three days later). The deal completed successfully a few weeks after that. ■

EXPAT ON THE (ENGLISH) MARKET: INTERVIEW WITH PAWEL SZAJA OF SHEARMAN & STERLING

By David Stuckey



CEELM: Run us through your background, and how you ended up in your current role with Shearman & Sterling in the UK.

Pawel: I was born and raised in Chelm, a small town in East Poland, 25 kilometers from the Ukrainian border, where I went to high school. I moved to study German Literature and Law at the Warsaw University, and I graduated in 2005. During my university time I spent three years in exchange programs at the Goethe University in Frankfurt, the Freie University in Berlin, Universite de Geneve in Switzerland, and Universite de Paris II in France. In 2004 I went on a three-month secondment to the

legal department at Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt where I came across Capital Markets, International M&A, and ABS Financing Structures for the first time. I thought it was quite interesting and worth focusing my career on. What followed was a Masters in Law & Finance from the Institute for Law and Finance in Frankfurt in 2006 and an LL.M. from Columbia Law School in 2008, allowing me to pursue this plan and a career in Capital Markets. I took the NY bar after my LL.M., started in Capital Markets at Davis Polk in New York in 2008 and moved to London in 2009 because of my family. I continued at Davis Polk in London, went on secondment to the ECM execution team at Credit Suisse

London in 2014 and switched to Shearman & Sterling at the end of that year. I made Partner at Shearman & Sterling in January 2018.

CEELM: Was it always your goal to work outside of Poland?

Pawel: I would not say that it was my goal from the beginning. As with everything in life, it is a function of circumstances, luck (stars need to align!), and personal decisions. I did want to study abroad, which I did through exchange programs, and which helped me decide about my professional career.

CEELM: Tell us briefly about your practice, and how you built it up over

"It is the understanding of the culture and language skills that in my opinion make the difference. It happens quite often in this part of the world that transactions are executed solely in a local or regional language and having someone from London who can pick up the phone and just make the discussion easier for the client means a lot."

the years.

Pawel: Since making Partner at Shearman & Sterling in January 2018 I have covered Emerging Markets and DACH (Germany, Austria, and Switzerland). Although equity and debt capital markets is my core practice, I have also done quite a lot of M&A and bank finance work in the region. Prior to COVID I would travel quite a lot to build and maintain contacts in the region. Right now it all happens online.

CEELM: How would clients describe your style?

Pawel: I like to think that I know how people think in the Emerging Markets and what drives them. I try to use my background and language skills as my assets and am quite conscious of cultural sensitivities. I view it as key to being a successful emerging markets lawyer.

CEELM: There are obviously many differences between the Polish and English judicial systems and legal markets. What idiosyncrasies or differences stand out the most?

Pawel: While I was educated in Poland

and other European civil law countries, I am only admitted to practice in certain common law countries. The general principle of law – either what is not prohibited is allowed or, alternatively, only what is explicitly enumerated is allowed – causes the main differences and often-times interesting discussions among lawyers. On the other hand, the importance of English law, in particular in Emerging Markets, is significant, and it often results in changes to how local lawyers perceive certain aspects. Seeing in person how the law and application of law changes is the exciting part of my job.

CEELM: How about the cultures? What differences strike you as most resonant and significant?

Pawel: Looking at Europe's Emerging Markets in particular, the history in the past 30 years is definitely critical to the understanding of how people in those countries think and act. Some of the most important decisions in living history (such as the fall of communism, accession to the European Union, NATO, and various global crises) have happened during this time. My personal view is that the countries are still catching up with Western Europe, not only economically but also from a cultural and social perspective, but the youngest generation of people – such as, for example, my Polish cousins in high school – view themselves as European citizens first, and I do not really see many differences between them and, for example, British teenagers. This is a major change compared to my generation or the generation of my parents.

CEELM: What particular value do you think a senior expatriate lawyer in your role adds – both to a firm and to its clients?



Pawel Szaja

Pawel: It is the understanding of the culture and language skills that in my opinion make the difference. It happens quite often in this part of the world that transactions are executed solely in a local or regional language and having someone from London who can pick up the phone and just make the discussion easier for the client means a lot.

CEELM: Do you have any plans to move back to Poland?

Pawel: I do not exclude it as an option in 10/15 years although other countries, such as Spain or Portugal, are equally strong candidates!

CEELM: Outside of Poland, which CEE country do you enjoy visiting the most, and why?

Pawel: Recently I have been spending quite some time in Turkey and started reading more about their culture and history. It is a fascinating country, with great history and, more importantly, some of the best food in the world!

CEELM: What's your favorite place to take visitors in London?

Pawel: A little-known family-run Italian trattoria in Chelsea, Tate Modern, and Richmond Park (deers!). ■

EXPAT(S) ON THE MARKET: AN UPDATE

Over the course of our seven years, CEE Legal Matters has interviewed most of the British lawyers working on the ground in Central and Eastern Europe as part of our recurring “Expat on the Market” feature. We reached out to them recently and asked them to bring us up to speed on what they’re doing and/or share their thoughts on the ramifications of Brexit or the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

By **Andrija Djonovic**



How has **Brexit** impacted your practice, if at all?



Christian Blatchford, General Counsel, Energo-Pro (in the Czech Republic):

Well, Brexit might just destroy my practice. Lawyers qualified in England and Wales (and other parts of the UK) who are now practicing law in the Czech Republic on the basis of the EU Withdrawal Agreement and a specific Czech law on Brexit will lose that right from January 1, 2021, unless the UK and EU agree otherwise. This now seems unlikely, given the shortness of time and relatively niche market involved. The Czech Law on Advocacy does, however, permit those who have been practicing here for at least three years to apply for admission to the Czech Bar. The catch? You have to have been providing Czech law advice during that time. But how, you may ask, would that have been possible as a UK-quali-

fied lawyer? The solution to this additional problem is that a three-person panel from the Czech Bar Association could, based on an interview, waive the requirement in whole or part if the applicant demonstrates a sufficient knowledge of Czech law and professional rules. What is that standard? As I write this, I have no idea!



Nick Fletcher, Partner, Clifford Chance (Poland):

No significant impact. English law remains as popular as ever for any complex commercial transaction with a cross-border component. Perhaps greater reluctance to use English courts so more use of international arbitration. On a personal level, Brexit has led me to obtain Polish citizenship, which I have had for nearly two years now.



their degrees and professional qualifications will be recognized when they return to their homeland, and what the increase in university fees for EU students will mean for the loss of talent and diversity in Britain's universities. Personally, I have taken the precaution of finally applying for Greek citizenship (after nearly 24 years' residence).

How has **COVID-19** impacted your practice in CEE?



Graham Conlon, Partner, CMS

(Ukraine): I personally have remained just as busy in the last six months as I was prior to the crisis, working on deals throughout the region and beyond.

The pipeline also remains positive, and – touch wood – it will remain that way. But the nature of the deals has changed. Some clients who might have found it difficult to exit investments a year ago (because everyone was worried that a financial crisis might be on its way, and with buyers not knowing how to price that in) have all a sudden found themselves sitting on gold-mines, with targets shooting-up in value. This is especially the case with respect to those in the e-commerce and logistics space. Others have not been so lucky, and we are starting to see some assets come to market in more distressed circumstances. The international financial institutions (such as the EBRD) have also become more active in crisis times – so that is also a source of M&A deal activity in all sorts of countries around.



Mark Harrison, Partner, Harrisons

(Serbia): COVID-19 has had a positive impact on our practice in Serbia and Montenegro.

We closed our offices on March 16 and only re-opened on October 1. We worked remotely. However, COVID-19 brought us closer together as a team because our firm is based on a highly personal and friendly relationship between everyone, and working from a distance is no substitute. Every week we had a Zoom phone



Virginia Murray, Partner, Watson Farley & Williams (Greece):

As a qualified Greek lawyer, Brexit affects me less on a professional basis as most of my work concerns Greek energy and infrastructure projects. I do however see an increasing willingness of international investors to transact with Greek-law governed acquisition and financing agreements, drafted in English. Brexit has of course affected all of us practicing English law; we see a concern about using English law and courts for international contracts with regards to enforceability and recognition of judgments. In terms of influence on international regulations, in the energy sector and elsewhere, I see that Britain has lost significant ground as it withdraws from Europe.

On a wider level, I am particularly worried about the many bright young Greeks who are studying law in the UK, and how

call and they were fun. We talked openly about our firm and we realized how much we were all one family.

Second, it gave us all time to think about how a post-COVID-19 law firm would operate and how we would look after our clients and work together. Clearly personal meetings face to face with clients were going to be rare and everything was going to move more to an electronic interface. Our marketing strategy evolved substantially. When times are tough, you must adapt – be pro-active or go backwards.

Nobody left the firm. Our motto is “No matter what the work situation we always want the best lawyers.” So, we hired!

Finally, as the IFI’s have pumped money into our region post COVID-19 to help their clients, we have had a successful year to date.



Christopher Noblet, Partner, Hogan Lovells (Hungary): COVID-19 has certainly impacted our practice, both with regards to the support needed by our clients and how we carry on our business.

As regards to clients, this was particularly marked in March and April where many experienced the challenges of operating businesses amid the various restrictions from social distancing to travel restrictions. It appears with the renewed increase in cases, companies are again having to look at similar issues and how to deal with them, although with an increased level of preparedness compared to the spring.

In respect of our own business, we have, since March, seen the changes that working from home has brought to our operations and how it is possible to keep contact with all our colleagues through electronic means. We have also seen, increasingly, how technology can assist in matters which people previously were certain could only be done face to face, such as remote closings and the like. Of course, we miss the personal contact.



Dan Cocker, Partner, Allen & Overy (Poland): Almost the first I heard of COVID-19 was when I received requests for advice on force majeure notices. A major part of my practice is projects, energy, and infrastructure. In the early days of COVID-19 project developers and lenders asked us for advice on whether contractors could effectively claim force majeure for supply chain issues, for example in China.

The next new stream of work was liquidity facilities. Our international financial institution and commercial bank clients have been very quick and effective in supporting their clients with liquidity facilities. For example, we acted for the EBRD on its first Covid19-related Solidarity Package project in Poland and for the ADB and the EBRD on liquidity facilities for an Armenian energy sector client.

In the meantime, other major transactions in the energy and infrastructure sectors have continued. There’s a strong pipeline of new projects across the CEE region. We and our clients have had to learn some new ways of working. Locking all of the parties in a meeting room until the transaction documents are finalized no longer happens. But project finance has always been about overcoming obstacles to get the deal done. COVID-19 is another obstacle that, together, we will overcome.



Simon Dayes, Partner, Dentons (Romania): COVID-19 has had an enormous adverse impact on many businesses. The pandemic is providing our specialist financial restructuring teams with mandates that would not otherwise have existed. We have been supporting banks and sponsors in managing their relationships during the loan payment moratoria in CEE, and preparing for the end dates of these moratoria which are fast coming towards us. While the focus has been on positive restructurings during these last few months, the indications are that problems will emerge that will result in more post-insolvency activity as we get into 2021.

On the personal side, new working practices (and technology) often brings our colleagues in international offices closer together these days; we speak, and even see each other, more frequently. It is different within the office, and we give more thought now to keeping news, know-how, and culture circulating around the team as they work from home. We also make a point of getting together once a week, typically in a more informal context, to swap stories and plan.



Nick Fletcher, Partner, Clifford Chance

(Poland): I am sure my experience is the same as everyone else's, in terms of working practice, very limited travel, and very few physical meetings. In terms of types of work, a lot of interest in infrastructure (e.g., windfarms and photovoltaic projects) and tech. Oh, and a noticeable increase in client fatigue with multiple briefings on the obvious issues arising out of the virus.



Hugh Owen, Go2 Law (Slovakia): I have already been working from home for three years, so in one sense there has not really been any impact. I had already decided to take a step back from travelling so much, so in a way having everyone quickly get used to doing deals online without unnecessary travel, and without

locking everyone in those horrible all-nighters, was a welcome change. Obviously, you lose a lot from not having personal negotiations, but we are still able to do pretty much the same job through virtual meetings. I have not had any negotiations in any sense fail because they were conducted online. If anything, things get done quicker because there seems to be a subconscious reluctance to sit online all night. The timings of calls are more structured, and people do actually have a home to go to – they are frequently sitting in them.

Otherwise, the deal flow temporarily paused for a month or two, but in the end the deals are still being done, just in different sectors. I can't personally claim to have a crystal ball on this (yet), but obviously not all businesses suffer from current conditions – some even benefit – and there is plenty of that proverbial dry powder still waiting to be spent.”

Are there any significant career updates you'd like to share with us?



Doran Doeh, Arbitrator, 36 Stone (England)

(England): What a great interview, in the June 2014 issue! At the time I was a Senior Partner in Dentons Moscow and at one of the highest points in my career. It continued going from strength to strength, including some of the biggest oil and gas M&A deals in Russia in 2015 and 2016.

However, by March 2019 it was time to retire, and I made three big changes. I moved back to London, reverted to my original profession as a barrister, and joined a distinguished set of chambers – 36 Stone – as an arbitrator. In the intervening time, I developed my international arbitration practice, including qualification as a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators.

Despite COVID-19, international arbitration remains an exciting practice area, with rapid adaptation currently taking place to embrace the technology. Russia/CIS and the international oil and gas industry remain at the focus of many of the largest arbitrations. My chambers is based in London and Singapore, so I am well-placed for appointments – and the clerking team is excellent!

CONNECTED TO CEE

An Interview with Partners **Jonathan Marks** and **Richard Jones** from **Slaughter and May's** Dedicated CEE Partner Group

By **David Stuckey**





CEELM: Tell us about the CEE team at Slaughter and May. How does the firm cover the region?

Jonathan: My personal connection with the CEE region began when I was an associate in the mid-1990s and I did some work with the then-recently-formed Czech firm, PRK Partners, on a number of syndicated loans, as that market developed in the post-communist era. I am still in touch with the partners there, and my interest in this country eventually spanned out to the wider CEE region, where I've got to know and work with law firms and clients across the region for a number of decades. I have always enjoyed my visits to CEE — to fascinating cities like Prague, Warsaw, Budapest, Istanbul, and so on, being struck by the generosity of my hosts as well as the dynamics and hard work of the people that I have met.

Richard Jones, Gareth Miles, James Stacey and I have the pleasure of focusing on the region, both from a business development point of view and working on matters for clients who either come from the region or have business interests there. This means that we have a good understanding of what's happening in the region, and it has helped us develop close relationships with lawyers across CEE, which we, as a group, have spent a number of years (in some cases, decades) developing. Therefore, it is always particularly rewarding when we have the opportunity to collaborate with such firms.

In addition to the dedicated partner group, we also have a team of business development professionals in our International Relations Team focused on managing our relationships with lawyers



Jonathan Marks



Richard Jones

in the region as well as providing advice on ongoing business development opportunities.

Richard: I've worked on a variety of matters involving countries in the CEE region over the years, often where the use of English law is the only connection with the UK. I've also been one of the partners in the firm who focuses on CEE since shortly after I became a partner, working closely with Jonathan and the others, so I've had an opportunity to get to know a lot of the lawyers working in the region, including some who have been on secondment to our firm.

CEELM: What was your first personal experience of CEE, and what did you take away from it?

Richard: My first experiences of CEE were all based on trips for holidays or (in one case) a friend's wedding, but I've now visited many of the jurisdictions for business and, of course, we've been lucky to have many interactions relevant to the region in London (everywhere from our offices to an embassy) or via telephone or video conference. I think the main impression I have is of a region that, despite the various challenges that some of the countries in the CEE face, is continuing to move forward at a rapid pace, and is increasingly producing the sort of interesting and complex transactions that were once the preserve of the world's global financial centers. As a result, it's a very exciting time to be involved with CEE.

CEELM: How does Central and Eastern Europe fit into Slaughter and May's overall strategy?

Jonathan: As a leading international law firm with clients around the globe (including, of course, in CEE), a key part of our international strategy is to work in partnership with these clients by supporting their business activities, wherever they're conducted. It's important to us that, although we don't advise on the law of any jurisdiction in CEE, we're able to assist our clients in obtaining the right legal advice in any jurisdiction in the region.

In doing this, we work closely with leading law firms based in the region, either firms that we choose or recommend (based on our connections and experience in the region) or the client's own choice.

As with all the jurisdictions where we do not have our own office, a key part of our international strategy is to maintain

strong relationships with the leading law firms in CEE, which allows us to advise the client on the best firms to use for a particular matter.

This is really important, as it allows us to provide our clients with a truly global service, working in a collaborative way with the market leading lawyers in each jurisdiction.

CEELM: How does Slaughter and May promote and market its capabilities in the region?

Richard: One of the most effective ways of promoting our CEE practice has been via trips; meeting with existing and prospective clients, as well as renewing old bonds, and forming new ones, with lawyers from the region.

We have also found that attending conferences with a focus on the region both in the UK and locally is a useful way of raising our profile to a larger audience. We've been attending CEE Legal Matters' GC Summit for a number of years, which we've found to be a great source of information, as well as an opportunity to meet existing and potential clients. Additionally, the Law Society and the Department for International Trade host a number of roundtable discussions which provide a great forum to connect with those with an interest in the region.

We are also fortunate that many of the lawyers from the region make frequent trips to London, which often present the perfect opportunity for a meeting at our offices. We have found this regular contact a good means of staying on top of what is happening on the ground and ensuring we are focusing our business development efforts on the right juris-

dictions and types of work.

Although, given the present circumstances, we've had to replace physical meetings with video calls for most of this year, we've still found these to be very useful and have had virtual meetings with a number of law firms over the last few months.

"Although, given the present circumstances, we've had to replace physical meetings with video calls for most of this year, we've still found these to be very useful and have had virtual meetings with a number of law firms over the last few months."

CEELM: Do you have best friends you work with in the region? How do you maintain/strengthen those relationships?

Richard: Although we have very deep connections with a number of firms around the globe (some of which go back many decades), we pride ourselves by not having exclusive relationships with law firms anywhere in the world. This allows us to think of our clients' needs first, and also means that we can be truly flexible when working with law firms and ensure we work with the right firm on the right transaction/matter.

It also allows us to accommodate a client's preference. Often our clients have worked with a local law firm (sometimes for many years, sometimes just on one or two previous occasions), which means they wish to work with

them again. We approach each matter on a case-by-case basis, and never seek to impose our choice of local law firm on a client. Where a local firm has the key client relationship or is dealing with the main substance of the matter, we're always happy to liaise with the client through that firm, if that's preferred.

In terms of how we maintain and strengthen our relationships with law firms in the region, a large part of it is the regular dialogue and other activities mentioned above. However, nothing really beats working with another firm on a job, which allows both firms to get to know each other and our working styles, and hopefully leads to future opportunities to win, and carry out, work together.

"I think the main impression I have is of a region that, despite the various challenges that some of the countries in the CEE face, is continuing to move forward at a rapid pace, and is increasingly producing the sort of interesting and complex transactions that were once the preserve of the world's global financial centers. As a result, it's a very exciting time to be involved with CEE."

CEELM: Which specific deals in the region that you and your colleagues have worked on did you find most interesting/significant?

Jonathan: This is a tough question, but here are a few in no particular order:

In May 2018, we advised Vodafone on the acquisition of certain operations of Liberty Global. As part of this, Vodafone agreed to acquire Unitymedia in Germany and certain of Liberty Global's operations in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania for a total enterprise value of EUR 18.4 billion. This was a particularly exciting deal for us because, as a result of the acquisition, Vodafone completed its transformation into Europe's leading converged operator. Not only was Vodafone able to reshape its business, but it also became the owner of the largest gigabit-capable next generation network infrastructure in the CEE region. To top it all off, the transaction also won CEE Legal Matters' 2018 CEE Deal of the Year Award, which was an incredible recognition of the work we did.

In March 2019, we advised Marsh & McLennan on the sale of the global aerospace insurance broking business of Jardine Lloyd Thompson to Arthur J. Gallagher & Co. This deal covered a large number of European countries, including Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Romania, among other CEE countries. This matter was of great significance as it was a high-profile cross-border deal which transferred more than 10,000 employees to Marsh & McLennan, providing deeper industry expertise in every part of the organisation. As part of this transaction, we had the pleasure of working with a number of our independent relationship law firms in CEE and other countries.

In December 2019, we advised Cineworld on its all-cash acquisition of the entire issued and to-be-issued share capital of Cineplex at a price of 34 Canadian dollars per share, valuing the fully diluted equity of Cineplex at CAN 2.18 billion, with an implied enterprise

value of CAN 2.8 billion.

Cineworld is one of the world's leading cinema groups, operating 9,498 screens across 786 sites in the US, UK, Ireland, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Israel. This deal was of great significance, as it not only expanded Cineworld's business in North America, but also increased its presence in the CEE. We were also able to work collaboratively with the local law firms in the region.

In November 2016, we advised GE Capital on the sale of its remaining stake in Moneta Money Bank, which raised gross proceeds of approximately CZK 7.5 billion.

In January 2016, we advised RWE, a leading European utility group, in its successful defense of a USD 1.4 billion damages claim brought by the Russian Sintez Group, owned by Russian Senator Leonid Lebedev. This matter was particularly interesting as the claim was governed by Russian law and arose out of RWE's withdrawal from negotiations for a joint venture to buy a controlling interest in one of Russia's regional power generation companies, TGK-2. The case also involved extensive expert evidence on Russian law. We also advised on associated litigation in multiple jurisdictions.

Finally, we have been advising a number of financial institutions (including Aviva, Prudential, Standard Life, and Zurich) on their Brexit planning. For example, in June 2020, we advised in connection with proposed Part VII transfer of Polish branch of The Prudential Assurance Company Limited to a newly established branch of PAC's Irish subsidiary, Prudential International Assurance plc. ■

AFTER THE GOLD RUSH: WHAT CAUSES AND COMES AFTER AN INTERNATIONAL LAW FIRM'S DEPARTURE FROM A CEE MARKET

By Djordje Vesic



In the first decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, an enormous number of international investors descended upon the countries of Central and Eastern Europe – initially, and particularly, Romania and the so-called “Visegrad Group” of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary – to take advantage of the privatizations occurring across the region and, in the early years, manifold new and giant deals related to the region’s rapid modernization and integration. Inevitably, many of the larger London-based international law firms opened up offices in the region to provide their clients with on-the-ground assistance.

“The UK firms were well-acquainted with the privatization process, based on the UK’s 1980s experience of privatization. They believed they had something to offer the market, and that newly opening market had much to offer in return.”

Ultimately, however, as the flood of privatizations and big-ticket deals slowed first to a stream, then to a trickle, many of those international firms found the financial cases for local presence less compelling. How several of the Magic Circle firms that came to CEE narrowed their footprint, and how they structured the relationships with the offices they left behind, is the story.

Willommen, Bienvenue, Welcome

In the 1990s, the business case for English firms considering opening offices in Central and Eastern Europe was straightforward. As Lakatos, Koves

& Partners’ Partner Richard Lock, who came to Hungary as a secondee from Clifford Chance in 1992, remembers it, “the UK firms were well-acquainted with the privatization process, based on the UK’s 1980s experience of privatization. They believed they had something to offer the market, and that newly opening market had much to offer in return.”

Although the firm had opened its first office in the region in Moscow in 1991, Clifford Chance’s connection to Hungary came via the International Bar Association. “Clifford Chance’s contact in Hungary was Peter Koves,” Lock recalls. “He saw the trend of foreign firms coming to the country, and wanted to be part of it. He was active with the International Bar Association, and the IBA had engaged with young lawyers across Central Europe in the late ‘80s. That is how Peter met Clifford Chance – and how many contacts between lawyers in Central Europe and the international firms were made.” In June of 1992, Lock recalls, “I was seconded to Peter Koves’s office, Koves & Partners, to put a toe in the water and see how it would work. At the end of my first year here, in July 1993, Clifford Chance formally opened an office – Koves Clifford Chance.” Clifford Chance had opened its Warsaw office in 1992, and eventually opened other CEE offices in Bucharest, Kyiv, and Istanbul as well.

Linklaters established a sizeable CEE presence in the 1990s as well, initially by taking over the operations of *another* international operation. According to Michael Guiney – now the Head of Business Development at Kinstellar, formerly the Head of UK Marketing and Global Head of Client Communications at Linklaters – “a group of Canadian lawyers came to Central Europe



Richard Lock, Partner,
Lakatos Koves & Partners



Michael Guiney, Head of Business
Development, Kinstellar



Natascha Doll, Partner,
Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer

and set up a regional law firm in Prague in 1992 operating under the name Burns Schwartz, and its branches in Bratislava and Bucharest in 1993.” According to Guiney, “Burns Schwartz was integrated into Linklaters in 2000, [and] Linklaters’ Budapest office was established that same year.”



**Jozsef Bulcsu, Partner,
Oppenheim**

Auf Wiedersehen, A Bientot, Toodle-oo

International firms wanting to open offices in CEE markets are inevitably welcomed with open arms. The experience when they decide to withdraw is often less happy, even though that disappointment is often expressed (in public, at least) diplomatically. Natascha Doll insists that, for Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer there was a meeting of the minds between the English home office and the Hungarian lawyers on the ground in Budapest when it came time to go their separate ways in 2007. “It was very much a mutual path that we went down,” she says. “Over the years, the world had become a different place, and our clients developed other interests. Some of our offices successfully established relationships with local clients and advised them on the matters of local law. Freshfields’ clients were looking for more sizeable deals, and we decided that going our separate ways was a win-win situation for both parties.”

Freshfields to withdraw from Budapest was not unwelcome. On the contrary, he says: “Even though Freshfields’ departure was by mutual agreement, Oppenheim also agreed to the split because we saw that Freshfields was focused more on the international plan.” Although the opportunities to expand the Budapest partnership were limited before the split, that changed once the international firm withdrew. “We had eight senior lawyers, at that time, who all became partners of Oppenheim along with Ms. Ulrike Rein, a Freshfields’ partner.”

In Bulcsu’s opinion, over time, especially as the domestic competition became stronger, the appeal of the international firms – where opportunities for advancement were limited – started to fade somewhat. He points again to the rapid expansion of Oppenheim’s partnership following the international firm’s withdrawal. “There are similar examples in other international firms,” he says, “and I believe that, in the long run, those [international] firms found that it was more and more difficult to retain the talent.”

Again and again, the dearth of partnership opportunities is a familiar refrain. “When you take a look at most international firms that remain in Budapest, very few partners have made equity in recent years – it is hard to satisfy the profitability expectations of the big international firms in such a market and the leading and most dynamic lawyers want more than local or salaried partner status,” Richard Lock explains. As a result, he says, at Clifford Chance, “the idea of the spin-off emerged naturally from the tension between our wish to develop our practice and retain and offer partnership to our best lawyers, and the limited opportunity to make new partners in the international firms. So,



**Olexiy Soshenko, Managing Partner,
Redcliffe Partners**

That year – 2000 – was significant for Freshfields in CEE as well. It marked the firm’s formal arrival established its formal presence in thin the region, as a result of its merger with Bruckhaus Westrick Heller Lober, giving it the former Heller Lober Bahn & Partner headquarters in Vienna, as well as that firm’s offices in Hungary and Slovakia (which had operated under the Heller Lober brand since 1989), and the Czech Republic (which had been with Heller Lober since 1990). According to Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer Partner Natascha Doll, the firm’s Co-Head for the CEE/CIS region, “even though Heller Lober was independent, they are a part of our family now. So, we consider the founding of the offices in Central Europe as a part of our joint history.”

Jozsef Bulcsu, Partner at Oppenheim, the firm formed from Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer’s former Budapest office, agrees. “At the beginning of the nineties, there was an influx of large Western law firms. They were following their clients, which came to Hungary riding the wave of privatizations. The first and second waves provided a lot of financial incentives. Once those subsided, it was not really financially interesting for some of the large international firms to maintain their offices in Hungary.” Bulcsu knows the deal. “It is usually the case that big law firms have very tough and rational financial criteria for each of their offices. If those are not met, then they reevaluate the need for that office.”

Still, Bulcsu insists that the decision by

after difficult discussions with London, the idea of a spin-off arose.” According to Lock, who stayed in Budapest as a Founding Partner of the resulting Lakatos, Koves & Partners when Clifford Chance left in 2009, “it was an amicable split. Our relationship with Clifford Chance now is as good as or better than it was while we were a part of the firm.”

“It is usually the case that big law firms have very tough and rational financial criteria for each of their offices. If those are not met, then they reevaluate the need for that office.”

A similar financial cost/benefit analysis led to Clifford Chance’s decision to spin off its Kyiv office into Redcliffe Partners and withdraw from Ukraine in 2015, though the circumstances were slightly different. According to Olexiy Soshenko, the Managing Partner at Redcliffe Partners, “when Clifford Chance decided to leave Ukraine, they were concerned with the significant slowdown of the economy resulting from the turmoil in the East of the country. Traditionally Clifford Chance has been focusing on bigger markets, such as Asia, Africa and North America. That is when Dmytro Fedoruk and I decided to take over the office and turn it into Redcliffe Partners.”

According to a statement released by Clifford Chance announcing its 2015 separation from Redcliffe Partners, “the new set-up supports the strategic aims of both parties. It provides Redcliffe Partners with greater flexibility for investment in developing a practice aligned with the opportunities and realities of the Ukrainian market, as Clifford

Chance looks to focus on its global strategic priorities.”

Relationships That Remain

Of course, while they were quick to take advantage of the increased partnership opportunities, the local firms that remained when the international firms left did not refuse to take advantage of the benefits deriving from their shared history and close association with their former partners. Inevitably, agreements – either formal or informal – were put in place between the firms and their former offices to continue some form of cooperation in the future.

The specific nature of that ongoing relationship varies, of course, but it appears none of the English firms have extended an exclusivity guarantee – at least one they choose to make public. According to Freshfields’ Natascha Doll, “we have a very strong bond with our former offices, and we continue to work together. However, we don’t have any kind of exclusivity arrangement with any of them.” Instead, Freshfields created a “Stronger Together” program, in which the firm cooperates other independent firms, not limited to their former offices, in those jurisdictions where the firm has no formal presence. “We have a dedicated CEE and CIS practice, and through the program we cover the entire region from the Baltics to the Balkans,” Doll says. “Sebastian Lawson and I coordinate our relationship with the firms in our network.” Of course, personal relationships are key. “We know lawyers from our partner firms on an individual basis and we trust them. We have also been exchanging knowledge and experience through secondments. That has enabled us to work on very complex cases together.”

Oppenheim in Budapest is now in that category of “partner firms.” And Jozsef



**Dmytro Fedoruk, Partner,
Redcliffe Partners**



**Alex Cook, Managing Partner,
Clifford Chance Prague**

Bulcsu commends Freshfields for its efforts to strengthen those ties. “Apart from working on different cases together,” he says, “Freshfields also organizes regular meetings (although, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, their format has changed from in-person meetings to online gatherings). Most recently, we had a joint seminar on international M&A terms and a roundtable on cartels.” And it’s not only the Freshfields-organized events that foster the relationship, Bulcsu says. “We also attend conferences organized by the IBA, during which Freshfields hosts side-events.”

Similarly, Clifford Chance’s relationship with Redcliffe Partners in Ukraine and Lakatos Koves & Partners in Hungary is based on the principles of a “Best Friends” relationship, although all three

emphasize that that relationship is a non-exclusive one. “However,” Redcliffe Partners Olexiy Soshenko reports, “we are happy to bring them clients, and are grateful when they do so in return.”

“When you take a look at most international firms that remain in Budapest, very few partners have made equity in recent years – it is hard to satisfy the profitability expectations of the big international firms in such a market and the leading and most dynamic lawyers want more than local or salaried partner status,”

Back in 2015, upon the occasion of its spinning-off of Redcliffe Partners in Kyiv, Clifford Chance announced that “the continued working relationship, under a ‘best friends’ arrangement, ensures that multinational, major regional, and local clients will continue to benefit from high-quality legal advice from its established team in Ukraine, and access to a leading global platform.” Indeed, the firm emphasized, “under the ‘best friends’ arrangement, Redcliffe Partners will have access to Clifford Chance resources, including its know-how and training, with a view to ensuring the continued development of the best skills and expertise on the Ukrainian market.”

In that same 2015 statement, Olexiy Soshenko was quoted as saying “we see plenty of opportunities to further expand our capabilities and create rewarding long term career paths for our people,” and as asserting that “the shared platform with Clifford Chance – working jointly on client matters and

with access to their resources – means we are well positioned to remain one of the leading law firms in the market.”

Despite this “shared platform,” Redcliffe Partners’ Partner Dmytro Fedoruk insists that Clifford Chance doesn’t get special treatment, and he describes the client referral process between the Magic Circle firm and Redcliffe Partners as an informal one. “Sometimes our clients want multiple firms working on their case,” he says, “and they ask us for suggestions. We compile a list for them and, if we believe their expertise would be useful on the particular case, we suggest Clifford Chance among others.”

But familiarity and personal relationships are undeniably valuable. “We have a good relationship with Clifford Chance,” says Richard Lock of Lakatos, Koves & Partners. “From their point of view, they have access to a team in Budapest that they know and trust. They know they will get a good service from us. We know that, like any important client, they could go elsewhere, and therefore they have to be kept happy. Apart from a couple of cases where there was a conflict of interest, we get their work in Hungary. However, we are an independent firm and we also get work from many other leading firms. I think those other firms see our Clifford Chance past as a sort of quality assurance and, if you are looking for a strong independent legal firm, they take comfort from knowing that other leading international firms trust us.”

Thus, while formal commitments to exclusivity are missing, the reality is obvious. Alex Cook, Office Managing Partner at Clifford Chance in Prague, says: “If I am looking to work with someone in Hungary, I go to Lakatos Koves & Partners. I know Richard Lock very well and he is my go-to person in

Budapest. Bucharest Managing Partner Daniel Badea and I are Clifford Chance’s liaison partners for local firms in South East Europe where Clifford Chance does not have an office. On the other hand, Jared Grubb, our current Office Managing Partner in Istanbul, and previously Office Managing Partner of our former Kyiv office, maintains a fairly active relationship with Redcliffe Partners in Kyiv, which has a number of our former lawyers.”

Unlike Freshfields, however, Clifford Chance and its former offices in CEE do not have formal secondment arrangements in place. At least not yet, says Olexiy Soshenko of Redcliffe Partners. “We have not done secondments yet, but that is in our plans.” In the meantime, he says, “a number of our lawyers have taken various courses set up by Clifford Chance.”

Kinstellar’s relationship with Linklaters follows a similar pattern. According to Kinstellar’s Michael Guiney, even though Linklaters is highly respected by Kinstellar, there is no formal agreement for special treatment. “Linklaters is a great firm, and we are proud of our history and origins with it,” he says, “We learned a lot from our time there and their investment in clients, knowhow, training and applied the very best to Kinstellar.” He emphasizes that, “we work with them a lot, but they don’t receive any preferential treatment – we also cooperate closely with other firms who have an interest in the markets we cover.”

Exclusivity, no. Secondments, sometimes. Shared trainings and seminars, often. Benefits arising from past experience and personal relationships, always. Even as the Magic Circle’s presence on the ground in CEE shrinks, its traces continue to extend across the region. ■

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ILFS IN CEE: WHAT'S THE DEAL





The legal markets of Central and Eastern Europe are served by a growing cadre of strong domestic firms, an established collective of widely-recognized and genuinely impressive regional firms ... and, of course, many of the largest and best international firms in the world.

Since this special issue of the CEE Legal Matters magazine is focused on English lawyers and law firms, we invited all the international firms doing work in CEE to highlight that work by selecting five deals they have helped bring to conclusion on in the past five years – just five deals, although all of them have of course worked on many, many more – to demonstrate their capabilities, experience, and geographic coverage. Here's what they sent us.

CLEARY GOTTlieb STEEN & HAMILTON

■ In 2016, we advised the Qatar Investment Authority in its consortium with Glencore to purchase a 19.5% stake in Rosneft from the Russian state for EUR 10.2 billion, the largest privatization sale in Russian Federation history. QIA and Glencore committed EUR 2.5 billion and EUR 300 million respectively, with the remainder provided by a set of complex secured financings by Italian and Russian banks. President Putin announced the deal to the nation in December 2016; it closed in January 2017.

■ In 2017, we advised Far Eastern Shipping Company PLC on a comprehensive restructuring of its more than USD 1 billion of indebtedness under two series of U.S. dollar-denominated Eurobonds, two series of rouble-denominated bonds, and certain bilateral facilities and helped FESCO obtain up to USD 680 million multi-currency secured financing from VTB Bank. Completed in just over a month, this hugely complex transaction was named Russia Deal of the Year at the 2017 CEE Legal Matters Awards.

■ In 2018, we advised Transmashholding, Russia's largest manufacturer of locomotives and passenger rail cars, and LocoTech-Service, a leading Russian rolling stock maintenance company, on their combination with French multinational Alstom. The transaction, which involved a reorganization of ownership structure, renegotiation of the shareholders' agreement between Russian shareholders and Alstom, and complex migration of the combined company's holding structure from the Netherlands to Cyprus, was named Russia Deal of the Year at the 2018 CEE Legal Matters Awards.

■ In 2018, we advised the Hellenic Republic on its offering of a EUR 2.5 billion ten-year benchmark bond was part of a series of notes that comprised Greece's first bond offerings since the conclusion of the fiscal bailout programme in 2018. The offering marked Greece's return to the international capital markets on a "normal course" basis, and it was named

Greece Deal of the Year at the 2019 CEE Legal Matters Awards. Cleary also advised the Hellenic Republic on its 2012 restructuring, the largest-ever sovereign restructuring.

■ In 2018, we advised TPG on the USD 599 million sale of its 34% shareholding in Lenta to Severgroup and the parallel simultaneous sale by the EBRD of its 7.5% stake in Lenta for USD 130 million. The sales triggered a requirement for Severgroup to make a mandatory tender offer for all the remaining shares in Lenta, on which Cleary advised Lenta's board. The transactions were named Russia Deal of the Year at the 2019 CEE Legal Matters Awards.

CMS

■ In 2019, we advised the sellers on the EUR 1.2 billion sale of Vivacom Bulgaria, the country's leading telecoms and media operator with over 1.8 million customers, to United Group, an independent telecoms and media provider across South Eastern Europe. The private auction sale, one of the largest recent CEE transactions, was finalized in November 2019. The CMS CEE team was led by Partner Eva Talmacci and included Consultant David Cranfield, Partner Ana Radney, and Associates Szilvia Kabacs and Bogdan Buta.

■ In 2019, we advised international private equity firm Advent International and its portfolio company Zentiva on the acquisition of the CEE business of Alvogen. This transaction brought together two leading branded generics and over-the-counter businesses and involved the cooperation of more than 80 lawyers, led by CMS Partner Helen Rodwell, across 14 Jurisdictions, including the Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Russia, UK, Netherlands and the Balkans. This deal followed Advent International's EUR 1.9 billion acquisition of Zentiva from Sanofi.

■ We advised OTP on the acquisition of Societe Generale

subsidiaries SG Expressbank Group, Sogelife Insurance Company, and SG Banka Albania, valued collectively at over EUR 600 million. Completed in 2019, the transactions form part of OTP's SEE strategic expansion, strengthening its Bulgarian presence and facilitating its entry into Albania. Led by CMS Partner Eva Talmacsi, they are the first in an unprecedented mandate CMS won to advise OTP on multiple acquisitions across ten jurisdictions with a collective value of more than EUR 1 billion.

■ In 2018, we advised Liberty Global, the world's largest international cable business, on the Czech, Hungarian, and Romanian aspects of Vodafone's EUR 18.4 billion acquisition of Liberty Global's Unitymedia business in Germany, as well as its UPC brand businesses across the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Romania. The team was led by Global Head of TMC Christ Watson and included CEE Partners Helen Rodwell, Lukas Janicek, Dora Petranyi, Aniko Kircsi, and Horea Popescu.

■ In 2018, we advised major private equity house Cinven on its acquisition Partner in Pet Food, a leading European pet food manufacturer, from Pamplona Capital Management. Headquartered in Hungary, PPF has nine manufacturing operations across Europe. The deal, led by Graham Conlon in CMS' private equity practice, involved over 60 lawyers in seven jurisdictions and was approved by the EC in July 2018.

DECHERT

■ In July, 2020, we advised the Republic of Albania, acting through its Ministry of Finance and Economy, on the issuance of EUR 650 million 3.50% Notes due 2027. The offering, which was almost five times oversubscribed, marked Albania's first venture into the international capital markets since October 2018, when Dechert advised on its inaugural Rule 144A offering, the seven-year EUR 500 million 3.50% Notes due 2025 and simultaneous EUR 200 million capped tender

offer of its existing EUR 450 million 5.75% Notes due 2020, recognized as a 2018 CEE Legal Matters "Deal of the Year."

■ In July, 2019, we advised Mid Europa Partners on the acquisition and related financing of a majority stake in Mlinar d.d. from company founder Mato Skojo. Mlinar, the leading retail and wholesale bakery in Croatia, operates the largest bakery retail network in southeastern Europe, serving food and beverages to 36 million customers a year through 220 directly-owned stores in Croatia and Slovenia and via franchise stores across ten countries. Mr. Skojo retained a stake in the business after the acquisition.

■ In July 2018, we advised Coveris Holdings, a Sun Capital Partners portfolio company, on the EUR 700 million sale of its Global Rigid packaging business, consisting of manufacturing sites in Poland, Ukraine, and Hungary, to Lindsay Goldberg. The complex transaction, a carve-out involving 15 jurisdictions, was complicated by the contemporaneous sale of Coveris's American operations to Canada's Transcontinental. On its close, Coveris retained 25 strategically located manufacturing facilities in five countries, a strengthened balance sheet, and a total focus on its target market.

■ In October 2017, we advised Mid Europa Partners in the acquisition of Profi Rom Food, Romania's fastest-growing supermarket business. Dechert acted as lead transactional counsel and also advised on the acquisition financing. The transaction, which consisted of the acquisition of Profi Rom's entire issued share capital, was carried out by competitive auction. The deal was Romania's largest leveraged buyout and largest retail transaction to date.

■ In March 2017, we advised Magyar Telecom on the sale of its holding in Hungary's Invitel Group, a leading infrastructure-based telco and IT service provider, to the CEE Equity Partners-advised China CEE Investment Co-operation Fund. The sale valued the Invitel Group at an enterprise value of EUR 202 million. Magyar Telecom is 51% owned by Mid Europa Partners; the remaining shares are indirectly owned by the holders of Magyar Telecom's senior secured notes.

DLA PIPER

■ In 2017, we advised Wanfeng Auto Holding Group, a Chinese conglomerate specialized in engineering and manufacturing, on its acquisition of the Austrian aviation group Diamond Aircraft Industries GmbH. The transaction, which was one of the largest M&A transactions between China and Austria on record, was successfully completed in December 2017. It involved Austria, Canada, Croatia, Germany, Slovakia, and the UK.

■ In 2020, we advised GS Engineering & Construction, a leading global construction company based in South Korea, on the acquisition of 100% of the shares in Danwood Holding, the number-one manufacturer of prefabricated turnkey houses in Germany and Poland, from Polish Enterprise Fund VII, a private equity fund managed by Enterprise Investors. The value of the transaction is EUR 140 million.

■ In 2016, we advised Orkla, an international leading FMCG player in a multi-jurisdictional transaction for the acquisition of Hame, a leading branded food company in the Czech Republic and Slovakia and with a strong position in Romania, Hungary and Russia. We worked closely with our colleagues in other international DLA Piper offices from Oslo, Prague, Budapest, Bratislava, Vienna, Moscow and Kiev. The deal value was approximately EUR 175 million.

■ In 2020, we advised DS Smith on agreement to sell its Plastics division to Olympus Partners and its affiliate Liqui-Box Holdings, including the sale of operating companies in 12 jurisdictions. This transaction perfectly demonstrates our firm's international reach and depth of expertise, [as it] involved corporate and other specialists working collaboratively with our international network of DLA Piper offices and relationship firms in 11 jurisdictions and the client's US counsel.

■ In 2019, we advised NEQSOL on the acquisition of VF Ukraine (one of the largest local mobile network operators, with around 20 million subscribers) from Russian telecommunications operator MTS Group for USD 734 million, including USD 84 million of earn-out payment. The deal was named Deal of the Year in Ukraine by CEE Legal Matters and #1 among 10 largest M&A transactions in Ukraine in 2019 by InVenture investments analytics.

FRESHFIELDS BRUCKHAUS DERINGER

■ In 2016, we advised AB InBev on the sale of its businesses in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania to Asahi for an enterprise value of EUR 7.3 billion.

■ In 2018 and 2019, we advised Advent International on its acquisition of Zentiva, Sanofi's European generics business, for EUR 1.9 billion and subsequently on Zentiva's acquisition of the Central and Eastern European business of Alvogen, the global pharmaceutical company with leading market positions in 14 key markets across CEE, including Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and the Balkan markets.

■ In 2018, we advised Cinven, the international private equity firm, on its acquisition of Partner in Pet Food, a leading European pet food manufacturer, for an undisclosed amount. Headquartered in Hungary, PPF has nine manufacturing operations across Europe.

■ In 2018, we advised Liberty Global plc, the world's largest international TV and broadband company, on the sale of its operations in Hungary, Romania, the Czech Republic, and Germany to Vodafone for a total enterprise value of approximately EUR 19 billion.

■ From 2017-2020, we advised National Bank of Greece S.A. on its programme of divesting its international subsidiaries, including disposals in Bulgaria (United Bulgarian Bank A.D. – 2017), Serbia (Vojvodjanska Bank A.D. – 2017), Albania (Banka NBG Albania Sh.A. – 2018), and Romania (Banca Romaneasca S.A. – 2020).

GREENBERG TRAURIG

■ In 2017, we advised Anheuser-Busch InBev on the Polish aspects of the sale to Japanese brewer Asahi Group Holdings, Ltd. of the businesses that prior to its combination with AB InBev were owned by SABMiller plc in Central and Eastern Europe (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia) for EUR 7.3 billion.

■ In 2017, we advised CVC Capital Partners with respect to an agreement for the acquisition of Zabka Polska from Mid Europa Partners. The sale of Zabka is the largest ever transaction in the Polish food retail sector and the largest ever private equity exit in Poland. The transaction was recognized as the 2017 CEE Legal Matters Deal of the Year for Poland.

■ In 2018, we advised BNP Paribas Group on the acquisition of the core banking business of Raiffeisen Bank Polska for PLN 3.25 billion. The transaction was implemented through a demerger of Raiffeisen Bank Polska by spin-off of its core business to Bank BGZ BNP Paribas. The core business excludes foreign currency retail mortgage loan portfolio and a limited amount of other assets.

■ In 2018, we advised Goldman Sachs International, through its affiliate Bricks Acquisition Limited, on a PLN 1 billion tender offer for 100% of the shares in ROBYG S.A., one of the leading Polish developers, followed by a squeeze-out of minority shareholders and the delisting of ROBYG S.A. from the Warsaw Stock Exchange.

■ In 2020, we acted as Polish legal counsel to the investment banks in the initial public offering of shares in Allegro.eu and admission of Allegro shares to listing on the Warsaw Stock Exchange. The total value of shares amounted to PLN 9.2 billion and the capitalization of the company based on the IPO is PLN 44 billion, bringing the value of the IPO to PLN 10.6 billion, making it the largest IPO in Poland's history.

HERBERT SMITH FREEHILLS

■ In 2019 (re-signed in 2020), we advised NEPI Rockcastle plc on the sale of subsidiaries owning a portfolio of office buildings in Romania to AFI Properties. It is believed to be the largest deal in the Romanian real estate market and one of the biggest real estate deals in the Central and Eastern European region in 2019 and 2020.

■ In 2016, advised KKCG AG on the creation of a 75%-25% joint venture with EMMA Capital group. The transaction involved an intra-group re-structuring process and financing arrangements to aggregate all the lottery and gaming assets of both KKCG AG and EMMA groups into the joint venture company, SAZKA Group.

■ In 2019, advised an Asian investor on the acquisition from a US private equity firm of a portfolio of hotels across ten jurisdictions in Europe, including the CEE region.

■ In 2019, advised a client in relation to its acquisition of three separate development stage biomass projects in Poland, including the relevant acquisition, shareholders', and development arrangements.

■ In 2019, advised Impilo, a European specialist healthcare investment firm on the leveraged buyout of The Fertility Partnership, one of the leading European providers of fertility services ultrasound pregnancy scans and hormone treatments, with activities in the UK, Poland, and the Netherlands.

ORRICK

■ In 2016, we advised a consortium of international private equity firms including Bessemer Venture Partners, Columbia Capital, HarbourVest Partners, Innova Capital, MC Partners, and Oak Investment Partners, on the sale of Slovakian telecommunications provider Benestra to leading private equity house Sandberg Capital.

■ In 2017, we advised CVC Capital Partners in respect of its leveraged acquisition of Zabka Polska, one of Poland's largest chains of convenience stores, from Mid Europa Partners. No financial terms were disclosed. This deal was awarded the inaugural Central and Eastern Europe Deal of the Year Award for Poland at the CEE Legal Matters "Deal of the Year" Awards.

■ In 2019, we advised Vostok Emerging Finance on the sale of its holding in izyico to PayU Global B.V., the fintech arm of Naspers Group. This is part of a broader sale agreement with izyico's venture investors with the full purchase valuation set at USD 165 million, payable upon closing of the transaction. The sale remains subject to Turkish regulatory and competition authority approvals.

■ In 2019, we advised Sprints Capital on its investment in Vinted's EUR 128 million Series E financing round, valuing Vinted at more than EUR 1 billion. The round was led by Lightspeed Venture Partners and also included Insight Venture Partners, Accel, and Burda Principal Investments. Based in Lithuania, Vinted is the country's first unicorn and is one of Europe's largest second-hand apparel consumer-to-consumer marketplaces.

■ In 2017, we advised Vitruvian Partners on the acquisition of an approximately 30% stake in Bitdefender, a global cyber-security technology company founded and based in Romania. CMS and Norton Rose advised the target and seller group. The transaction valued the business at over USD 600 million.

SLAUGHTER & MAY

■ In May 2018, we advised Vodafone on the acquisition of Unitymedia in Germany and certain of Liberty Global's operations in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Romania for a total enterprise value of EUR 18.4 billion. The transaction also won CEE Legal Matters' 2018 CEE Deal of the Year Award.

■ In March 2019, we advised Marsh & McLennan on the sale of the global aerospace insurance broking business of Jardine Lloyd Thompson to Arthur J. Gallagher & Co. This deal covered a large number of European countries, including Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Romania, among others.

■ In December 2019, we advised Cineworld on its all-cash acquisition of the entire issued and to-be-issued share capital of Cineplex at a price of 34 Canadian dollars per share, valuing the fully diluted equity of Cineplex at CAN 2.18 billion, with an implied enterprise value of CAN 2.8 billion. Cineworld is one of the world's leading cinema groups, operating 9,498 screens across 786 sites in the US, UK, Ireland, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Israel.

■ In November 2016, we advised GE Capital on the sale of its remaining stake in Moneta Money Bank, which raised gross proceeds of approximately CZK 7.5 billion.

■ In January 2016, we advised the RWE utility group on its successful defense of a USD 1.4 billion damages claim brought by the Russian Sintez Group, owned by Russian Senator Leonid Lebedev. The claim was governed by Russian law and arose out of RWE's withdrawal from negotiations for a joint venture to buy a controlling interest in one of Russia's regional power generation companies, TGK-2. We also advised on associated litigation in multiple jurisdictions.

STEPHENSON HARWOOD

■ Currently, we are representing the former shareholders of Yukos Oil Company – Hulley Enterprises Limited, Yukos Universal Limited and Veteran Petroleum Limited – in English proceedings to enforce a USD 54 billion arbitration award against the Russian Federation. To our knowledge, this is the largest ever enforcement claim brought before an English court.

■ In 2019, we advised Interpipe Limited, a large Ukrainian steel pipes and wheels producer, as lead counsel on the restructuring of its entire debt portfolio – worth over USD 1 billion, making it one of the largest and highest profile financing transactions to close in the region in 2019. This involved debt owed or guaranteed by the Cypriot parent company and producing and trading companies around the world.

■ In 2019, we advised the Siberian Coal Energy Company, the largest producer of coal in Russia and a top ten producer globally, on a USD 1 billion pre-export financing from a lending syndicate led by Deutsche Bank. This was one of the largest financings into the Russian market this year and also one of the largest pre-export financings globally.

■ In 2019, we acted for Igor Mints, a successful Russian businessman who co-owns an international investment management company headquartered in London, in a claim of USD 572 million against him, his father, his two brothers, and the former top managers and owners of two major Russian banks, Otkritie and Rost, by PJSC National Bank Trust and PJSC Bank Otkritie Financial Corporation.

■ In 2019, we acted on behalf of UK-based private equity firm Lehram Capital in its investment treaty arbitration claim worth USD 500 million against the Russian Federation after local officials in Russia expropriated a large mine in which Lehram had invested. Described as “one of the most blatant cases of unlawful state expropriation that have arisen in recent years.”

WHITE & CASE

■ In 2019, we advised Takeda in connection with its agreement to divest a portfolio of select over-the-counter and prescription pharmaceutical assets in Russia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, which form part of Takeda’s Growth & Emerging Markets Business Unit, to STADA Arzneimittel AG, for a total value of USD 660 million.

■ In 2019, we represented the PPF Group, a Czech-founded investment group investing into multiple market segments such as banking and financial services, telecommunications, biotechnology, insurance, real estate, and agriculture, on an agreement to acquire Central European Media Enterprises Ltd., which operates television stations in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

■ In 2018, we represented CTP, a leading commercial real estate developer and manager of business parks in Central & Eastern Europe, on the EUR 450 million sale of a Czech logistics portfolio to Deka Immobilien. The portfolio consists of 36 A-Class buildings in prime locations in West Bohemia and the Prague region. This is one of the largest-ever real estate transactions in the Czech Republic, and it was the largest logistics deal in CEE in 2018.

■ In 2017, we advised PGE Polska Grupa Energetyczna S.A. on its PLN 4.51 billion (approximately USD 1.2 billion) acquisition of the EDF Group’s assets in Poland, including eight combined heat and power plants located in Trojmiasto, Wroclaw, and Krakow, the Rybnik power station in Silesia, and almost 400km of heating network in four cities. This transaction was one of the largest takeovers in the history of the Polish power and heating market.

■ In 2020, we advised Zynga, Inc., a global leader in interactive entertainment and mobile gaming, on the acquisition of Peak Oyun Yazilim ve Pazarlama A.S., a Turkish gaming company, for USD 1.8 billion, of which USD 900 million is payable in cash, subject to adjustments, and USD 900 million is satisfied by the issuance of Zynga common stock. The transaction represents the largest acquisition of a Turkish start-up company ever and makes Peak Turkey’s first technology “unicorn.”

IN MEMORIAM: ASLI BASGOZ

White & Case LLP and GKC Partners in Turkey are mourning the Friday, October 2, passing of White & Case Partner Asli Basgoz.

By Guniz Gokce, Managing Partner, GKC Partners



Asli was the co-founder of White & Case's office in Turkey in 1985 and served as a partner in the firm's Global Mergers & Acquisitions Practice. Hugh Verrier, Chairman of White & Case LLP, in his tribute to her, said: "Asli was a pioneer in Turkey, where she helped to build the White & Case practice into the market-leading position it holds today. She was the first woman elected to a leadership role in the firm's more-than-100-year history and the first woman to serve on its global Executive Committee."

Asli had a passion for serving clients and led countless groundbreaking transactions. She worked across an unusually wide range of practices and industries and had a rare ability to nurture and maintain over many decades close relationships with clients. She was highly trusted not only for her advice, sound judgment and experience, but also for being fair-minded in her treatment of others.

Asli was also a champion for women and diversity and a great mentor and role model for young professionals, legal or otherwise. She dedicated her life to supporting educational and charitable causes.

Asli was a true legal icon. Over her three and a half decades with the firm she was White & Case personified for the Turkish legal and business community. This kind of respect and recognition is a reflection of Asli's total dedication, professionalism, fair mindedness and tireless mentoring. She is greatly missed.

White & Case is grateful for the huge outpouring of condolences and remembrances received from clients, former colleagues and other law firms. Asli Basgoz left an indelible mark on an enormous number of people in Turkey and around the world.



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