

INTERNATIONAL LEGAL NETWORK - OVERCOMING CHALLENGES AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

Legalink is a non-exclusive international network of 70 independent law firms. Its motto is "International but Personal". International it certainly is. Legalink has members in all continents and regional business hubs within Europe, the Nordic countries, Asia, North and Latin America and Australasia. All members have traditionally treated all work referred to them by a Legalink member firm as "personal".

As Chairman Andrew Demetriou who is a lawyer practicing in Cyprus explains "when a colleague from another Legalink member firm asks you to look after the business of his client in your jurisdiction you do inevitably take it personally and you ensure that the client gets the best possible service. Similarly, when you refer a client to another law firm you want that client to be treated in a special way. This is the Legalink way."

Legalink was founded in 1991 by a group of European lawyers who met on a US law course. They became friends on the course and decided to form a network, of what was then around seven firms. They gradually introduced more friends and a network began to form.

Today, 26 years on from the first tentative steps, which really stemmed from the desire of the original founders to keep in touch and cooperate wherever possible Legalink has moved on. Its members are all independent law firms having a high reputation for the provision of high quality legal services in their jurisdictions. It has become a business focused network whilst still uniquely amongst networks maintaining and fostering close ties and friendships between its member firms and the delegates who meet for its Bi- Annual General Meetings.

Internal growth and knowledge transfer are essential elements of Legalink membership. Member contacts are encouraged in Practice Groups and also in events organized on a practice or regional basis.

The newly established Legalink Academy further strengthens awareness throughout the network and thereby promotes the internal growth of the network encouraging contacts and communications between the associates of the member firms in a truly international and multicultural setting. This not only encourages the associates to broaden their horizons and their contacts but also introduces the network to a new generation of lawyers within its member firms.

The significance to an independent law firm of being part of the right international network is immeasurable and is becoming an essential element of growth for all ambitious independent law firms. It is clearly demonstrated by the approach of the network and its member firms to global challenges and opportunities.

Challenges – Maintaining External Growth

The network has successfully met the challenges faced in Latin America with the influx of global law firms "poaching" member firm's due to their excellent reputation. The network was sorry to lose these firms but as explained by Anneliese Moritz of the Brazilian Legalink member firm Felsberg Advogados, who was entrusted with the task of replacing and expanding the Latin American Membership, "such moves end up being positive to the network, as it is a chance to bring in new enthusiastic members who are willing to give their best to the network and which will, naturally, generate increasing business opportunities for the benefit of all members".

Having such top-notch law firms as Nicholson y Cano in Argentina, Felsberg Advogados in Brazil, Quiroz Santroni in the Dominican Republic, Rosas y Rosas in Panama and Hughes & Hughes in Uruguay, Legalink was conscious of the necessity to keep the bar high whilst recruiting new members in Latin America.

Detailed research in jurisdictions playing a key role in the world economy where Legalink felt the need to add a member, has ensured a strategic overview of the local legal markets as well as identifying the most prestigious law firms in each country. Existing members also contributed to the selection of new members, based on previous concrete work experience with many law firms in Latin America. These pro-active initiatives have resulted in the membership of Grasty Quintana Majis in Chile, Muñoz Tamayo & Asociados in Colombia, Ramos Ripoll & Schuster in Mexico and Hernández & Cía. Abogados in Peru, all in a period of less than a year.

This process has enabled Legalink to be represented in major Latin American countries by full service law firms, all top-ranked and recognised by the most respected legal market research publications.

The expansion of the network continues with a thorough selection and application process in



Legalink Members on THE BELT AND ROAD ROUTE

China Shanghai and Beijing	Estonia Tallinn	Malaysia Singapore
South Korea Seoul	Latvia Riga	Indonesia Jakarta
Kuwait Safat	The Netherlands Amsterdam and The Hague	Philippines Manila
Israel Ramat Gan	Italy Milan	Czech Republic Prague
Turkey Istanbul	Ethiopia Addis Ababa	Hungary Budapest
Bulgaria Sophia	India New Delhi	New Zealand Auckland
Romania Bucharest	Vietnam Ho Chi Minh	Slovakia Bratislava
Ukraine Kyev	Thailand Bangkok	South Africa Johannesburg
Russia Moscow		Slovakia Bratislava

Equador, Bolivia, Cuba and Paraguay. "Our goal is to be present in all Latin American countries, gathering under the same umbrella qualified, reputable and motivated law firms, proud of being members of Legalink and who enjoy working together in the Legalink way", says Anneliese Moritz.

Opportunities – Working together to Service our Clients Global Needs and to Generate Quality Business

As explained by David Zou, a committee member who is based in Shanghai, China, the international spread of Legalink and the excellent relationships that exist among the membership make the Legalink network the ideal vehicle to take advantage of the global "Belt and Road" outward investment initiative currently being promoted by the Chinese government.

Legalink members were briefed on the initiative contents, implications, and potential opportunities arising from the "Belt and Road" initiative in its Berlin Conference which took place nearly four years ago, just at the inception of the initiative. This business knowledge sharing function is a unique feature of Legalink as an international network and the high quality of its members.

Legalink has member firms on both the traditional Silk Trade route and the Maritime trade route. These to ancient trading routes form the basis of the Belt and Road initiative. It was therefore Legalink, as a network, was uniquely placed to take full advantage of the work generating aspects of the Belt and Road initiative.

Since then, relevant member firms have been actively cooperating with a view to generating business arising from the Belt and Road initiative on a one to one basis as well as group efforts. In March 2017, a regional conference entitled "China Outbound Investment and M&A: Challenges and Opportunities" was held in Shanghai which attracted more than 100 attendees from Chinese companies actively investing and looking for projects overseas such as CEFC, Hainan Airlines, and Shenzhen Capital Group.

This conference was sponsored by Grandway Law Offices, Legalink member in China as well as ACG, a

mid-market M&A advisory network. Seven Legalink members (Australia, Malaysia, Thailand, Japan, South Korea, Germany, China) made presentations about opportunities in their respective countries. This conference generated a lot of opportunities spanning Europe, African, Middle East, and the America's.

A network should meet the challenges present in the legal profession and demands from its members. Despite its present members in many of the "Belt and Road" regions, Legalink is still actively selecting qualifying members to complement its membership coverage as well as enhance capabilities to meet legal assistances needs in the region. Ultimately, it is the members that make a network work and effective. Legalink members are in a position to mobilize tremendous resources in the "Belt and Road" region. Members initiatives, participations, and contributions are crucial to promoting cooperation among Legalink members.

The network is furthering its "Belt and Road" business programme with a Belt and Road initiative that has been promoted by the network's Hong Kong member firm Charltons entitled the Belt and Road Forum 2017 held in Chengdu, China between 28th and 30th July 2017. Additionally, the Autumn 2017 General Conference to be held in Beijing, China this coming October will bring the network members in close contact with Chinese outbound corporate and individual investors.

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