

Seven Summits Arbitration launches in Munich



The new boutique promises to practise Paris-style arbitration in Munich, 7SA

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A former counsel at the ICC International Court of Arbitration and former associate at Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer in Paris have teamed up to form a boutique in Munich - Seven Summits Arbitration.

7SA has been formed by **Gustav Flecke-Giammarco** and **Gebhard Bücheler**. It is dedicated to commercial and investment arbitration, with both members of the firm offering their services as counsel and arbitrator.

The two Germans got to know each other in Paris, where Flecke-Giammarco spent six years as counsel at the ICC, heading the case-management team for Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Benelux and the Nordic region, and Bücheler spent three years with Freshfields.

After that, both moved to German firms. Bücheler joined Wach + Meckes in Munich in 2013 and Flecke-Giammarco joined Heuking Kühn Lüer Wojtek in Düsseldorf in 2015.

In February this year, Flecke-Giammarco left Heuking Kühn to set up his own practice in Munich, Flecke-Giammarco Arbitration. At that point the pair started talking about joining forces and agreed to do so in April.

“There is a certain trend in the market for starting boutique practices that has a lot to do with conflicts of interests and lower cost-overheads. For us, the key reason was that we had a common vision: we wanted to do international arbitration work in Munich in the same way we first learned it in Paris,” Bücheler tells GAR.

“In hindsight, Flecke-Giammarco Arbitration was an intermediate step towards the creation of our boutique. It allowed us to hit the floor running but has now been folded into 7SA. In terms of logistics, we will continue to use the same office space and IT infrastructure.”

Having between them worked as institutional counsel, law firm member, arbitrator and tribunal assistant, the pair have a variety of perspectives on the arbitral process. "This diversity is part of Seven Summits Arbitration's DNA," says Flecke-Giammarco. "Striking a balance between counsel and arbitrator work will come naturally. But in the medium term we expect to do more counsel than arbitrator work".

When it came to naming their boutique, the pair were inspired by their shared love of the Bavarian mountains with their seven summits. Bücheler grew up in the ski-town of Garmisch and served in a combat ski platoon during his compulsory military training. Flecke-Giammarco is Munich-born and also loves to spend time in the mountains.

At the same time, they feel "Seven Summits" conveys their "passion for international arbitration" and their internationalism. The phrase is also used to describe the highest mountains of Europe and the highest mountains of the seven continents, they note.

At the ICC, Flecke-Giammarco supervised more than 850 arbitrations, including investment treaty and emergency arbitrator cases.

Identified by *Who's Who Legal Arbitration* as a "future leader", he is currently arbitrating cases under the rules of the ICC, Swiss Chambers Arbitration Institution and the Finnish Arbitration Institute, as sole arbitrator, co-arbitrator and chairman.

He is also on the 12-member committee drafting new rules for the German Institution of Arbitration, which are scheduled to enter into force in early 2018.

Qualified in New York as well as Germany, Bücheler has acted in investment disputes, multi billion-euro gas-pricing cases against Gazprom and high-stake commercial cases related to M&A transactions and the medical sector. He is currently serving as tribunal assistant to German arbitrator and former International Court of Justice judge **Bruno Simma**, who supervised his PhD on proportionality in investor-state arbitration.

News of the boutique has been welcomed. **Simon Greenberg**, a partner at Clifford Chance in Paris who was deputy secretary general at the ICC when Flecke-Giammarco joined, says he offers "not only stand-out legal and organisational skills and cultural openness but genuine interpersonal skills, which must be an enormous asset whether he is sitting as arbitrator or working as counsel."

Georgios Petrochilos, who was head of Freshfields' Paris arbitration team when Bücheler was working there and later co-founded Three Crowns, says the boutique "is bound to be crowned with success: the model of specialised arbitration outfits is proving successful, in Germany as elsewhere, and 7SA's two founders have sterling credentials."

Rolf Trittman, a member of the ICC Court and partner at Freshfields in Frankfurt, says that "in an environment where large international firms are confronted with complicated conflict issues, there is lots of room for boutique firms".

Seven Summits is interesting, being composed of "young but experienced arbitration specialists," he says. "I am sure it will be a success story".

