

## Curtis creates five new counsel

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GAR 30 firm Curtis Mallet-Prevost Colt & Mosle has promoted five senior associates to counsel in France, Italy, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

The five new counsel are **Sabrina Aïnouz** and **Jérôme Lehucher** in Paris, **Mira Suleimenova** in Astana, **Ruslan Galkanov** in Ashgabat, and **Denis Bonvegna** in Milan. All of the appointees have experience in both investor-state and commercial arbitration.

The firm, which is well known for representing states in investment arbitrations, announced the promotions on Friday. They took effect on 1 January.

Aïnouz joined Curtis in Paris in 2005, where she has focused on oil and gas, construction and agriculture disputes among other work. Her experience includes arbitrations under a variety of governing laws, including French, English, Dutch, Swiss and New York law.

She was counsel to Turkmenistan in the recent ICSID case brought by Turkish construction company Kilic Insaat, which was thrown out last July on jurisdictional grounds because the investor failed to submit its dispute to local courts first, as required by the Turkey-Turkmenistan bilateral investment treaty.

Aïnouz is a member of the Paris bar and the ICC's Algerian national committee, and has two master's degrees from the University of Paris-Nanterre.

Lehucher was an associate at Curtis's New York office for a year before moving to Paris in 2008. He previously worked at Argentine firm M&M Bomchil, which helped foreign investors bring claims against Argentina, and has experience in ICSID, UNCITRAL and ICC disputes.

More recently, Lehucher has acted on behalf of Kazakhstan in multiple disputes, each time achieving a positive result for the state. In 2011, he was part of a team led by partner **George Kahale** in New York that helped the state settle a pair of UNCITRAL arbitrations over export customs duties and cost recovery at the Karachaganak oil and gas field.

He also represented Kazakhstan in investment claims filed by Kazakh-registered oil company Caratube and local poultry producer Ruby Roz, which were both dismissed on jurisdictional grounds. Caratube has since applied to annul the jurisdictional award and has also filed a new joint claim with its US majority shareholder, Devincci Hourani, on a different legal basis.

Fluent in English, Spanish and French, Lehucher is also a member of the New York State bar association. He completed his LLM in Northwestern University School of Law and has postgraduate degrees from Paris V René Descartes and Paris II Panthéon-Assas Universities.

**Peter Wolrich**, managing partner of Curtis' Paris office, says he sends the new counsel his sincere congratulations. "Sabrina and Jérôme's promotions are testament to the growing strength of Curtis' arbitration practice in Paris. I have had the pleasure of working closely with them both over the past few years, and they have already made an invaluable contribution to the firm and its clients," he notes.

Among the other promotions, Suleimenova in Astana focuses on cross-border disputes and corporate transactions. Her past work includes cases under the ICSID, LCIA and Russian Arbitration Court rules.

Before joining Curtis, Suleimenova was based at Specht Rechtsanwälte in Vienna and was part of a team at the firm that helped real estate development company Alpha Projektholding win US\$5 million from Ukraine in 2010 in an ICSID award that concerned the privatisation of a Kiev hotel.

She also spent time in-house at the investment management arm of Russian oil refining services group OJSC Alliance and worked at the Almaty office of Baker & McKenzie. Suleimenova is a member of the Astana Bar Association and the Young Austrian Arbitration Practitioners group. She completed her legal training in Kazakhstan.

Galkanov is a Turkmen national and a graduate of Turkmen State University. He now splits his time between Ashgabat and New York and has worked on ICSID and ICC cases. He also has extensive experience in-house, having been a director and lawyer at ConocoPhillips and a research consultant at the corporate finance advisory firm Goetz Partners. In the latter role, he worked on legal profession development, legislative reform and commercial law monitoring projects for the American Bar Association and the EU's TACIS programme – a project aimed at helping former CIS states in their transition to democratic market economies. Galkanov also worked at PriceWaterhouseCoopers in Moscow and the US law firm Bracewell & Giuliani in Kazakhstan.

He also holds degrees from the University of Bremen and Charles University in Prague. He advises on Turkmen oil and gas, finance, corporate, M&A and tax law in addition to international arbitration.

Finally, Curtis has promoted Bonvegna, who joined the firm in 2009 from the Milan office of Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, where he was an associate in the litigation department. Bonvegna also worked at legacy firm Norton Rose between 2001 and 2005.

A member of the young arbitration practitioners' groups of the LCIA and the Swiss Arbitration Association, he completed a law degree at Italy's Catholic University of Sacro Cuore, followed by an LLM in international business law at King's College London, where he took a module in international commercial arbitration under **Martin Hunter** and **VV Veeder QC** of Essex Court Chambers.

He also advises on the environmental and urban planning law aspects of M&A deals, as well as on contentious and non-contentious matters related to Italian administrative law.

**Galileo Pozzoli**, managing partner of Curtis' Milan office, describes Bonvegna as "a valuable member of a talented international team" and says his promotion is well deserved.

Kahale notes the promotions reflect the "strong contribution" that the five lawyers have made to the firm and to clients.

"Over the past five years, international arbitration and growth in Europe have been core parts of our firm-wide business plan. Aside from recognising the contributions of these individuals, the promotions can be seen as a reflection of success in implementing that plan," he tells GAR.