

## Curtis opens in Brussels

Tom Jones  
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*Simon Batifort*

Curtis Mallet-Prevost Colt & Mosle partner **Simon Batifort** will relocate from New York to Brussels to establish a new office for the firm “in the capital of Europe”. Batifort will make the move later this month.

The new office will focus initially on investment treaty and commercial arbitration and public international law, but there are plans to expand its offering to include international trade and other practices.

“Opening in the heart of the European Union is a natural next step for Curtis,” says the firm’s chairman and head of its international arbitration group **George Kahale**. “Brussels is a strategic location for several of our practice areas and it will enhance Curtis’ established European presence.”

He says Batifort “came up through the ranks” in the firm’s New York headquarters, where he has “represented key clients in many high-profile international arbitrations and has significantly contributed to the development of our practice.”

“He is one of the most talented and driven international lawyers of his generation and the ideal person to lead this expansion.”

A French national who is dual-qualified in New York and Paris, Batifort was part of the Curtis team representing Venezuela that convinced an ICSID annulment committee to slash US\$1.4 billion from a US\$1.6 billion award in favour of ExxonMobil – thought to be the largest ever annulment at ICSID. The oil company has since resubmitted its claim.

He also helped Saudi Arabia to defeat a US\$2.76 billion investment treaty claim brought by a Kuwaiti-owned company based in Mumbai that conducts medical screening for migrant workers in the Middle East.

Batifort has successfully represented Turkmenistan in a number of investment treaty cases, including persuading an UNCITRAL tribunal to throw out a joint treaty claim by 22 unrelated investors, and defended India in treaty claims brought by Vodafone over a retroactive tax bill.

Batifort joined Curtis in 2011 and was promoted to counsel at Curtis during the 2018 New Year promotions. He was promoted to the partnership a year later.

He has been recognised as one of the “Most Highly Regarded” international arbitration partners under 45 in the Americas by *Who’s Who Legal*, including in its

2021 edition. He also teaches investment treaty arbitration at Brooklyn Law School in New York.

“After 10 years practising in New York, I’m excited and grateful for this opportunity to lead Curtis’ latest expansion,” said Batifort. “Brussels is a major policy hub for international economic law and investor-State dispute settlement and is perfectly situated at the crossroads of several key jurisdictions for international arbitration and public international law. I look forward to further developing our leading practices in these areas from the ‘capital of Europe’.”

**Charles Buder**, a London-based partner who heads Curtis’ public international law group, said: “Our new Brussels office will deepen our public international law and international arbitration offerings in the EMEA region. I’ve worked closely with Simon over the last few years and I’m delighted that he will be bringing his experience and energy to this side of the Atlantic.”