



Liedekerke practice heads seek pastures new

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Hakim Boularbah and Nicolas Angelet

The head of litigation and arbitration at Liedekerke, **Hakim Boularbah**, has departed for Loyens & Loeff with a team of associates, while the head of public international law **Nicolas Angelet** has left to set up an independent practice.

Boularbah and his team of associates joined Loyens & Loeff's Brussels office on 1 January, the same day his former colleague opened his new Brussels-based practice, Angelet.

Boularbah and Angelet were Liedekerke heavyweights, having been at the Brussels office of the Belgian-founded firm (full name: Liedekerke Wolters Waelbroeck Kirkpatrick) for 16 and 20 years respectively.

Together, the pair have acted for the Yukos majority shareholders in their attempt to enforce an US\$50 billion Energy Charter Treaty award against Russia in Brussels, an action which was [discontinued](#) in 2017; and for Kazakhstan, resisting an attempt by Moldovan businessmen Anatolie and Gabriel Stati to enforce a US\$530 million SCC award against the state through assets owned by its sovereign wealth fund in Belgium.

They have also advised Viorel Micula, one of the Micula brothers, in his attempt to enforce a €178 million ICSID award against Romania in Brussels. GAR understands the two will continue to collaborate on this matter.

At Loyens & Loeff, Boularbah, who is a Belgian and Moroccan national, will head corporate litigation and international arbitration in Brussels. He is joined by **Olivier van der Haegen**, a former senior associate at Liedekerke who also worked on the *Yukos* enforcement and has been promoted to counsel, and four former Liedekerke associates specialising in arbitration: **Maria-Clara Van den Bossche**, **Sarah Compagnion**, **Jasmine Rayée** and **Amandine Muniken**.

Loyens & Loeff, which was founded in the Netherlands, has a larger global reach than Liedekerke with 11 offices worldwide. Boularbah tells GAR that one of the reasons his team decided to move is to “team up with Dutch, Luxembourg, Swiss and Singapore colleagues” to offer enhanced international arbitration services.

The team’s dispute resolution skills will also mesh well with sector specific expertise at Loyens & Loeff, he suggests.

Loyens & Loeff’s global head of dispute resolution **Hendrik van Druten** welcomes the new team, saying Boularbah’s “expertise and top tier recognition in international arbitration” will set it apart from competitors and boost the firm’s disputes practice internationally.

Angelet, a Belgian national, tells GAR he decided to set up a Brussels boutique focused on public international law in part to “avoid the recurring conflicts of interest that prevent me from acting as an arbitrator more frequently.”

“Independent practice will also be more conducive to my practice as a counsel before international courts and tribunals in matters other than investment law,” says Angelet.

Angelet says that the public international law practice which he founded and built at Liedekerke has generated “interesting and varied” work over the years, including for Belgium in a case relating to the Rwanda genocide of the early 1990s and for Total in a case concerning alleged corporate complicity in human rights abuses in Myanmar.

He was counsel to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the reparations phase of an International Court of Justice case against Uganda over armed activity carried out in the Congo (until the whole team resigned recently) and to the DRC’s state mining company Gécamines in the well-known *FG Hemisphere* case.

He also represented Belgium at ICSID, helping it [defeat](#) a €1 billion claim from a Chinese investor on jurisdiction.

He will continue as a professor of public international law at the Free University of Brussels, as well as an associate tenant of Doughty Street Chambers in London.

Commenting on the moves, **Emmanuel Gaillard**, the Paris-based head of international arbitration at Shearman & Sterling, describes Boularbah as “the foremost enforcement specialist in Belgium” and “an impressive international arbitration lawyer and arbitrator”, adding that he has also been impressed by van der Haegen’s advocacy,

“They will no doubt build a first-class arbitration practice within Loyens & Loeff in no time,” he says.

Olivier Caprasse, a Belgium-based arbitrator and member of the ICC Court, says Boularbah is “not only a great academic but one of the most respected and brilliant Belgian litigators, with tremendous experience in international arbitration and international disputes more generally.” He and the “rising star” van der Haegen form “an impressive and efficient team,” he says.

Yas Banifatemi, who is a colleague of Gaillard at Shearman in Paris and heads the firm's public international law practice, says that she regards Angelet as "one of the finest public international law specialists" with "true expertise" in this field and investment arbitration.

"I have no doubt that his new practice will be tremendously successful, and that he will be sought after as an arbitrator," she says.

French arbitrator **Brigitte Stern** says that she first knew Angelet "as a brilliant academic" when he participated in colloquia organised by a research centre at the University Paris 1, Panthéon Sorbonne, of which she was director.

She says they entered into a further professional relationship in 2000, when, as counsel, he gave her first nomination as an arbitrator in *Ridgepointe v the Democratic Republic of the Congo* at ICSID, playing "a fundamental role" in launching her career in the field.

Stern adds that Angelet has "all the qualities to become a prominent member of our arbitration community," including rigour in his legal reasoning and a balanced approach to problems.

Following the departures, Liedekerke's international arbitration practice will be led by partner **Arnaud Nuyts**, who has been at the firm for almost three decades and also worked on the *Stati* case.

Nuyts says the practice of international arbitration and related litigation at the firm continues to thrive, with two other Brussels-based partners aside from himself, **Aimery de Schoutheete** and **Roel Fransis**, and seven associates.

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