

## Zurich boutique hires from CMS



*Axel Buhr*

**Douglas Thomson**  
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Zurich boutique Gabriel Arbitration has hired a new partner from the local office of CMS, the former home of its founding partner **Simon Gabriel**.

CMS von Erlach Poncet associate **Axel Buhr** will join Gabriel as its second partner on 1 July. The firm also has two associates, **Katalin Meier** and **Nataša Hadžimanović**.

Gabriel Arbitration was established by Gabriel, himself a former CMS lawyer, in 2012. Over the past five years, the firm has been involved in cases ranging in value from US\$500,000 to US\$120 million.

Its caseload includes commodity disputes and arbitrations relating to infrastructure and public licences. As arbitrator, Gabriel is chairing a tribunal hearing a US\$66 million dispute under the Swiss Rules.

Buhr is a 40-year-old German national qualified at the bars of Germany and Switzerland. He has been at CMS Zurich since gaining his doctorate at the University of Lucerne in 2009.

He and Gabriel first crossed paths at the university, where Gabriel also did a doctorate, and then at CMS. Recently, the two have published academic articles on international arbitration together.

Buhr's caseload at CMS has been a mix of arbitrations under ICC and Swiss Rules. As counsel, he handled a US\$190 million Swiss Rules joint venture dispute in the renewable energy sector and is currently involved in a complex ICC dispute that has given rise to three different arbitrations between the same parties.

He will continue acting on those cases jointly with CMS from his new firm.

He has been sole arbitrator in three Swiss Rules disputes, and tribunal secretary in three ICC disputes ranging from US\$570,000 to US\$7.5 million in value.

He has also appeared before the Swiss courts in arbitration-related matters, including before the Swiss Federal Supreme Court in a landmark case that led to a 2010 ruling that arbitrators did not have the power to issue binding awards relating to their own fees.

Gabriel says the decision to hire a second partner at Gabriel Arbitration was a response to client demand and that Buhr is “a brilliant arbitration lawyer and outstanding academic”.

“Our clients often have very sophisticated in-house legal teams,” he says. “They do not require legal trainees for legal research. They are rather looking for a spearhead who will fight their case before the tribunal: somebody who has experience as an arbitrator and is thus capable of convincing an arbitral tribunal in the most suitable manner.”

“I am very happy that we now can offer two spearheads.”

**Daniel Girsberger**, an attorney who also teaches at Lucerne University, says Buhr was “one of the best research assistants I ever had: highly intelligent, considerate, sharp, but yet with a sense of what is practical.” He says Buhr is a “perfect match” for Gabriel.

Swiss practitioner **Sandra De Vito Bieri** says she was “much impressed with the high quality of Axel’s work in combination with his modest personality” when he appeared before her in a Zurich arbitration. “I am convinced that Axel will further strengthen the international reach of Gabriel Arbitration as he brings with him his German legal background, and that it will be a big pleasure for clients and colleagues to work with him.”