

# CMS lawyer launches boutique in Zurich

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Simon Gabriel

After five years as an associate at the Zurich branch of the CMS law firm network, **Simon Gabriel** is founding his own international arbitration boutique in the city.

The 35 year-old will open Gabriel Arbitration on 1 November. He says he is glad that he had “the courage to step out of his comfort zone and into a new business situation”.

Gabriel says he hopes to fill a gap in the Zurich market for an arbitration boutique with fewer conflicts of

interest. “I do hope that I will be able to contribute to Switzerland’s attractiveness as a place for international arbitrations by adding to the diversity of specialised arbitration law firms,” he says.

Gabriel joined CMS von Erlach Henrici in 2007, after working at the University of Lucerne as research and teaching assistant to **Daniel Girsberger**, a professor of Swiss and international private law, commercial law and procedural law.

Girsberger says Gabriel is an “outstanding” lawyer who is “very hard-working and determined”.

Despite Gabriel’s young age, Girsberger believes the boutique may well succeed: “In this new era people are networking much earlier than the older generation, and Gabriel will already have some clients to take with him. In addition, his low infrastructure costs will appeal to cost-aware clients.”

Swiss arbitrator **Pierre Karrer** thinks there is a trend of arbitrators going solo early in their careers. “Simon is a sharp thinker who has accumulated already quite some experience. I wish him well,” he says.

**Daniel Hochstrasser**, head of Bär & Karrer’s arbitration practice in Zurich, adds that opening a boutique is “courageous” but that Gabriel has the “impressive skills” needed.

Gabriel is on the ICC Switzerland and VIAC lists of arbitrators and has acted as arbitrator and counsel in cases under Swiss, ICC, DIS and SCC rules, as well as in ad hoc cases.

Among his career highlights is the successful representation with CMS partner Oliver Blum, of clients in parallel arbitration proceedings in three European countries as lead counsel in a €100 million dispute: “The direct comparison of the different arbitration-cultures was very instructive.”

However, as somebody interested in advocacy, he says that “every verbal pleading or witness examination – be it from the counsel’s or from the arbitrator’s perspective – is a personal highlight”.

**Beat von Rechenberg**, partner at CMS von Erlach Henrici, says Gabriel has “built up quite a standing in a short time as both arbitrator and counsel”.

“We are sorry that he is leaving but impressed that he is taking up this challenge and think he will be a great success.”

Gabriel enjoys boxing and Argentine Tango in his spare time, which he quips are not so different from arbitration: “It’s the footwork that makes the difference.”