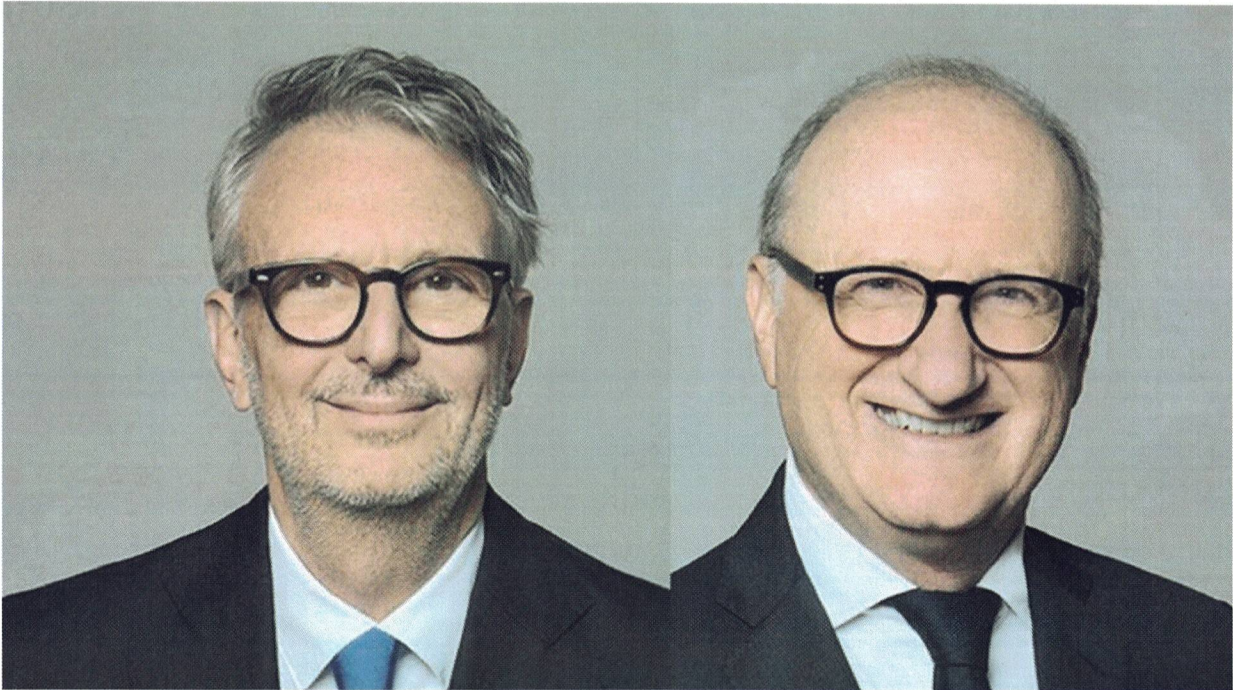


Pestalozzi practice heads launch new boutique

Susannah Moody

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Laurent Killias and Thomas Legler

Pestalozzi's former heads of arbitration in Zurich and Geneva, **Laurent Killias** and **Thomas Legler**, have broken away from the firm to launch a new disputes boutique.

The duo announced last week they had left Pestalozzi and formed Killias & Legler in Geneva and Zurich.

Killias and Legler spent 15 and ten years respectively at Pestalozzi, where Killias served as the firm's head of arbitration in Zurich and Legler led the arbitration team in Geneva. **Florian Mohs** has stepped into the role of Pestalozzi's head of practice.

The focus of Killias & Legler will be on arbitrator appointments but both Killias and Legler will also act as co-counsel on select matters and will keep some of their litigation practice.

Killias tells GAR: "We both felt that the time had come to embark on a new professional journey; the arbitration world continues to evolve and we believe that our new venture is another step along that path."

Legler adds: "We are grateful for so many years of happy cooperation within Pestalozzi's arbitration practice and are aware that we are leaving many good colleagues."

Killias launched his legal career at Pestalozzi in 2009.

During his time at the firm, he successfully represented the owner of a casino and tourism project in a billion-dollar licensing dispute against Palestine which went three times before the Swiss Federal Supreme Court. His arbitrator work includes presiding over an ICC construction claim involving Saudi, Norwegian and US parties and worth over US\$2.2 billion.

Killias was reappointed this year as a member of the ICC Court and serves a member of the legal committee at the Swiss American Chamber of Commerce. He is a co-founder and head lecturer at the Swiss Arbitration Academy and co-editor of the Swiss Journal on Civil Procedural Law. Killias also lectures at the University of Zurich and the Swiss Arbitration Academy.

ICC president **Claudia Salomon** describes Killias as "an invaluable member of the ICC Court" and "someone who pays attention to the details and cares deeply about the quality and enforceability of the award".

He is a graduate of the University of Zurich, King's College London and the University of Lausanne.

Legler [joined](#) Pestalozzi's Geneva office from **Wolfgang Peter's** former firm Python & Peter in 2015.

His counsel work includes [advising](#) India in Swiss proceedings relating to an ICC award won by Deutsche Telekom over the Devas saga. As arbitrator, he has chaired various ICC tribunals hearing patent licence disputes and has sat regularly as a sole and party-appointed arbitrator.

Legler serves as a part-time judge at the Swiss Federal Patent Court and a domain name panellist at the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). He is on the rosters of arbitrators for technology-related disputes at the Silicon Valley Arbitration & Mediation Centre, for IP disputes at the HKIAC and at Swiss Athletics.

Legler is also chairman of WIPO's IP dispute resolution panel for trade fairs in Geneva and served from 2008 until 2021 as vice-chair of the IBA's intellectual property committee. He is a frequent speaker and contributed to the GAR's 2024 Guide to IP Arbitration.

Admitted to the bar in Bern in 1988 and Geneva in 1991, Legler studied at the Universities of Bern and Geneva.

Laurent Lévy of Lévy Kaufmann-Kohler tells GAR that both Killias and Legler are "highly experienced practitioners whom I have had the pleasure of seeing before me as counsel on several occasions", and that for Killias this is "one more feather to add to his already well-furnished cap".

Herbert Smith Freehills partner **Patricia Nacimiento** says she has worked with Killias for many years on complex disputes, describing him as "an outstanding expert on Swiss law and disputes, and always a pleasure to work with".

White & Case partner **Michael Polkinghorne** says he has known Killias "personally and professionally for well over a decade" and comments: "Given his personal skills, professionalism and commercial judgment, he is bound to succeed! It is simply a pleasure to know and work with him."

Christian Camboulive of Gide Loyrette Nouel tells GAR: "Thomas' move to create a boutique firm dedicated to dispute resolution mirrors a now well-established market stream. It is likely to allow him and his partner Laurent Killias to bolster their existing practice as arbitrators and counsels in minimizing conflict issues."

"Always well prepared and diligent, his ability to listen and his particular knowledge of IP related matters, will be great strengths for the development and success of this new venture."

Pestalozzi tells GAR the firm wishes Killias and Legler "all the best as they embark on this new chapter with their own practice".

"Pestalozzi deeply values the contributions they made during their time with us, and we are parting ways on good terms."

Meanwhile, at the end of last year the firm appointed Zurich-based partner Mohs as its new head of arbitration across the Geneva and Zurich offices.

Mohs comments that he is "honoured to take on this new challenge and lead our arbitration team, which has consistently achieved outstanding results". He adds: "I look forward to working with our talented colleagues to continue delivering excellence for our clients."

Pestalozzi chair **Christoph Lang** says: "We are delighted to have Florian Mohs as our new head of arbitration. Given his extensive experience as counsel in arbitration, the timing was ripe for the next generation of partners to take over the lead. Our clients will benefit from the continued strength and development of our arbitration team."

White & Case partner **Christian Theissen**, who has co-counselled with Mohs, describes him as an "excellent choice", saying "having worked with him as co-counsel in a high-stakes arbitration regarding a complex infrastructure project, I can attest to his great counsel skills".

Theissen adds: "He is very precise, pleasant to work with and an excellent strategist. I wish him every success in his new role."

Mohs' counsel work includes [representing](#) France's Bouygues Construction in a €300 million dispute with Swiss energy company Alpiq over the sale of its engineering services business. That dispute settled for €50 million.

Mohs has been with Pestalozzi since 2006, and he was promoted to partner in 2016. He studied at the universities of Freiburg and Basel, before gaining his LL.M at the Victoria University of Wellington.

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