



ASA elects new president and revamps board

Douglas Thomson • Monday, 7 October 2013 (4 hours ago)

The Swiss Arbitration Association, or ASA, has elected Elliott Geisinger as its new president, along with a new board that features an unprecedented number of non-Swiss names.



Elliott Geisinger

ASA elected the new 24-member board at a general meeting in Bern on 4 October. The new appointees will serve a two-year term, beginning on 1 January.

Geisinger, a partner at Schellenberg Witmer in Geneva, is vice president of the current board. He will replace Lalive partner **Michael Schneider**, who has served as president for four years. MME Partners' **Bernhard Meyer** will remain as vice president of the new board, with other vice presidents to be appointed later.

ASA's old board had been made up almost entirely of Swiss practitioners, with the exception of German national **Klaus Sachs** of CMS Hasche Sigle. The new board is significantly more international, with a third of its members coming from outside the country. The association says this reflects the make-up of ASA's membership, a third of whom are non-Swiss.

Sachs, who is staying on as a board member, is joined by US arbitrator **William W Park**; Singaporean **Michael Hwang SC**; German national **Anke Sessler**, chief counsel for litigation at Siemens in Munich; and Austrian **Franz Schwartz** of Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr in London. They are also joined by British national **Constantine Partasides** of Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer in London, and two French lawyers, **Pierre Mayer** of Dechert in Paris and **Isabelle Hautot**, corporate counsel for France Telecom-Orange.

Not only is the new board twice as large as its predecessor, it is also more gender-balanced than the current all-male board, with six female practitioners among the 24. The presence of Sessler and Hautot also adds the perspective of in-house counsel.

The election comes as part of a period of change within the ASA, beginning with the creation of an executive director position in 2012, which was filled by US arbitrator **Alexander McLin**. ASA adopted new articles of association in April this year, and a month later **launched** the Swiss Arbitration Hub, which is aimed at centralising the booking of venues, interpreters and other arbitration services in Switzerland, which does not possess a dedicated arbitration hearing centre.

McLin says, “The election of the new board is the result of reflection within ASA that has taken place for the better part of the last two years. All of these changes resulted from the ASA leadership’s intention to create a board that reflect the diversity of the membership, including the third of members based outside Switzerland. This global dimension is now firmly present, as is the perspective of key in-house legal decision-makers who are frequent ‘users’ of arbitration.”

He adds, “Given ASA’s mission to foster critical thinking, the board contains academic leaders as well as experienced practitioners. Finally, as a whole, the incoming board more closely reflects the age and gender diversity of today’s practitioners. These attributes were all considered important in order to foster the continued growth and evolution of arbitration as the favoured dispute resolution mechanism going forward.”

The incoming president, Elliott Geisinger, says, “I think that I can speak for the entire new team by saying that we are deeply indebted to Michael Schneider. Thanks to his leadership and vision we are now in an ideal position to continue developing ASA as a thought-leader in the world of arbitration.”

“We are all looking forward to tackling the many challenges that arbitration will face in the coming years, in Switzerland and worldwide. The insight that the high-level representatives of arbitration users now sitting on the board will give us will be extremely valuable for our work.”

Schneider, who is remaining on the board as an ordinary member, says, “Over many years, the ASA saw thought leadership about domestic and international arbitration practice as one of its principal roles. By the new structure and newly composed board we hope to continue pursuing this role in the global environment of modern arbitration.”

The elections came ahead of an ASA conference last week on the subject of confidential and restricted information in international arbitration, with speakers including Luca Radicati di Brozolo, Barton Legum of Dentons and Andrea Menaker of White & Case.

ASA Board Members 2014-2016

- **Elliott Geisinger***, president, partner at Schellenberg Wittmer in Geneva
- **Bernhard Meyer***, vice president, partner at MME Partners in Zürich
- **Domitille Baizeau**, partner at Lalive in Geneva
- **Bernhard Berger***, partner at Kellerhals Anwälte in Bern
- **Felix Dasser**, partner at Homburger in Zürich
- **Isabelle Hautot**, corporate counsel for France Telecom – Orange in Paris
- **Michael Hwang SC**, arbitrator in independent practice in Singapore and chief judge of DIFC
- **François Kaiser**, partner at Carrard Associés in Lausanne
- **Pierre Mayer**, partner at Dechert in Paris
- **Andrea Meier**, partner at Wartmann & Merker in Zürich
- **Christoph Müller**, Dean of Faculty of Law, University of Neuchâtel
- **Gabrielle Nater-Bass**, partner at Homburger in Zürich
- **Christian Oetiker**, partner at Vischer in Basel
- **William W Park**, professor of law at Boston University and president of LCIA

- **Constantine Partasides**, partner at Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer in Paris
- **Paolo Michele Patocchi***, partner at Lenz & Stahelin in Geneva (working from own boutique Patocchi & Marzolini from 1 January)
- **Henry Peter**, partner at PSM Law in Lugano
- **Wolfgang Peter***, partner at Python & Peter in Geneva
- **Klaus Sachs***, partner at CMS Hasche Sigle in Munich
- **Michael Schneider***, partner at Lalive in Geneva
- **Franz Schwarz**, partner at WilmerHale in London
- **Anke Sessler**, Chief Counsel Litigation for Siemens in Munich
- **Frank Spoorenberg**, partner at Tavernier Tschanz in Geneva
- **Pierre Tercier***, independent arbitrator and professor emeritus at University of Fribourg
- **Nathalie Voser**, partner at Schellenberg Wittmer in Zürich

**re-elected from previous board*

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