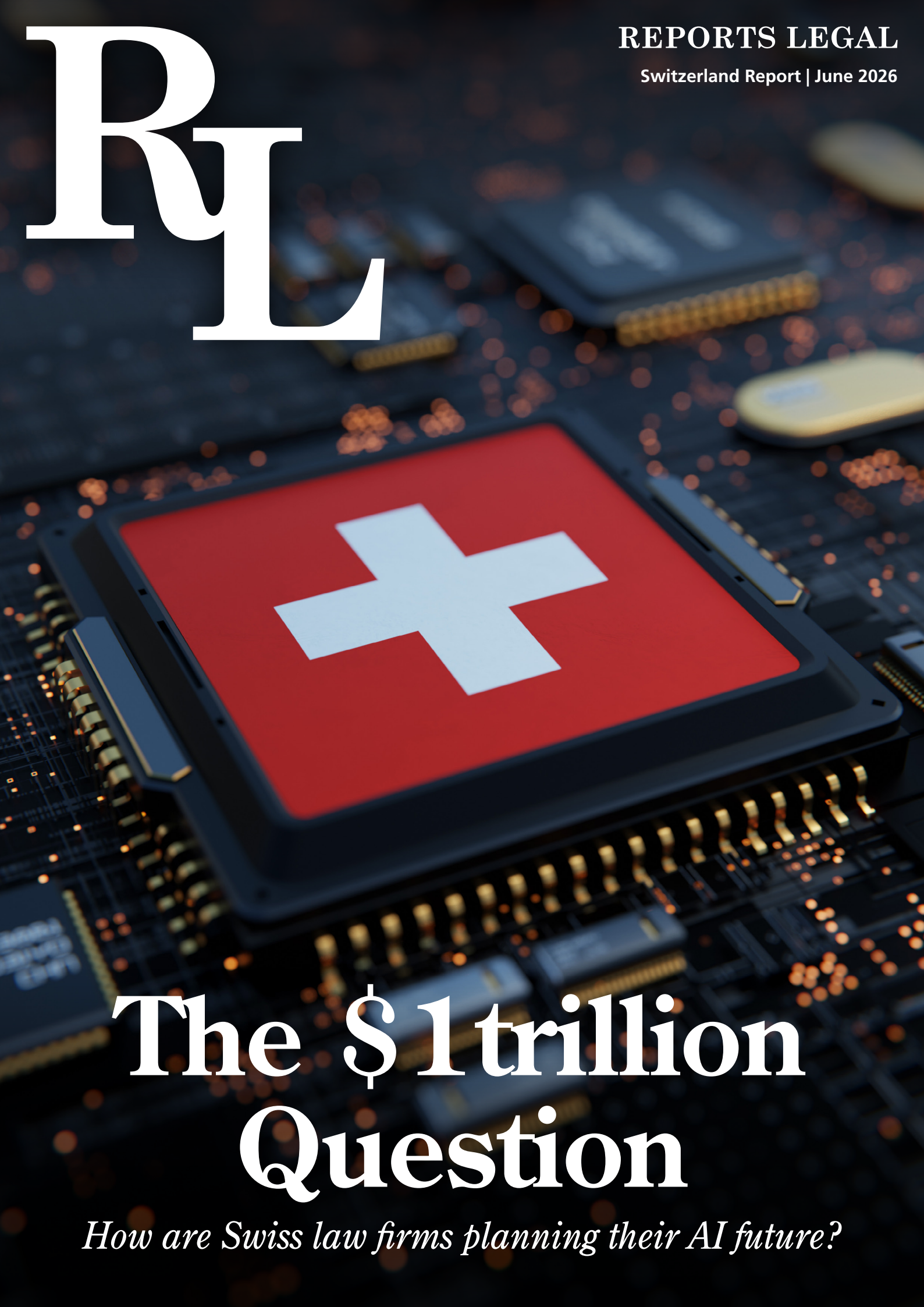


The background of the entire page is a close-up, high-angle photograph of a dark-colored electronic circuit board. In the center, a square integrated circuit (chip) is prominently displayed. This chip has a red surface with a large, white, stylized cross in the middle, which is the national flag of Switzerland. The chip is surrounded by various other electronic components, including smaller chips, gold-plated pins, and solder joints. The lighting is dramatic, with warm, golden-brown bokeh lights scattered across the board, suggesting a high-tech, futuristic environment.

RL

REPORTS LEGAL

Switzerland Report | June 2026

The \$1 trillion Question

How are Swiss law firms planning their AI future?

Zurich

Basel

Geneva

VISCHER
SWISS LAW AND TAX



Setting course for what is next.



At VISCHER, legal expertise meets entrepreneurial thinking. We help businesses, institutions and individuals turn complexity into lasting opportunity.

Swiss law & tax for what is next.

vischer.com

Contents



Nestlé: Corporate governance lessons

4

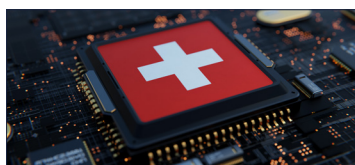
What does Nestlé's former CEO's indiscretion say about why personal conduct matters?



No to a Switzerland with 10 million!

10

There was relief that Swiss voters rejected a proposed population cap, but there might be further trouble ahead



The \$1tn question

14

As Elon Musk's total wealth surpasses Switzerland's annual GDP, how and where does AI fit in the Swiss legal landscape?



Uncertainty: The new normal

20

How are repeated external shocks impacting the resilience of Swiss lawyers?



Advestra spreads its wings

28

The fastest-growing Swiss law firm with Gen Z appeal recently added disputes and employment to its client offering

REPORTS LEGAL

Reports Legal
Research Legal Ltd
The Cottage
Grange Road, Widmer End
Bucks HP15 6AD

Images: Shutterstock

Editor:

Dominic Carman
T: +44 (0)7930 644201
E: dominic@reportslegal.com

Business Director:

James Air
T: +44 (0)7557 258410
E: james@reportslegal.com

Designer:

Chris Morrish
Creative Director, Pagelab
www.pagelab.co.uk

Consultant: Alex Berry
Creative Director, Maltin PR
www.maltinpr.com

Sub-editor: Laura Air

Research: Rachel Carman

Digital Publisher: PageSuite
www.pagesuite.com

Nestlé:

Corporate governance lessons



Dominic Carman

As the world's largest food and beverage conglomerate, Nestlé is known externally for its vast portfolio of 2000 brands including coffee, confectionery, infant formula, and pet care products. But last year, the Swiss multinational attracted significant attention for a case of internal misconduct.

After nearly four decades at Nestlé, Laurent Freixe succeeded Mark Schneider as the company's chief executive officer (CEO) in 2024. On 1 September 2025, Nestlé announced Freixe's immediate dismissal citing an "undisclosed romantic relationship with a direct subordinate which breached Nestlé's Code of Business Conduct."

Nestlé's former CEO failed to disclose his romantic relationship with a junior exec: what does his indiscretion say about why personal conduct matters?

This followed investigations that were initially triggered by a report from an anonymous tip to "Speak Up", the company's whistleblower hotline. According to a Nestlé spokesperson, Freixe was not dismissed for having a relationship with a junior colleague, but for failing to report it. Nestlé's mandatory conflict of interest declaration requires employees to disclose potential conflicts of interest that could be damaging to the reputation of an employee, the company, or both.

According to the Financial Times (FT), it was alleged that Freixe's undisclosed relationship was with a junior female marketing executive who reported directly to him. She departed the company during the inquiry process.

Know the rules

One Swiss lawyer wryly observes: "When you are the CEO of such an icon, you know what the rules are. The rule that applies to every individual is linked to your position. At Nestlé, people



investigation was conducted after which the claims were upheld.

To assist Bulcke and Isla, Bär & Karrer was engaged as independent outside counsel on the second external investigation. Beyond corporate governance and internal investigations, the firm has regularly served as a Swiss legal advisor on Nestlé's financial matters, including advising joint bookrunners on the consumer giant's multi-billion dollar note and bond offerings.

Bär & Karrer lawyers reviewed personal data, including text messages and photos. Evidence of the relationship was uncovered as well as improper favouritism. Freixe, who denied the relationship throughout the course of both investigations, was dismissed immediately without receiving an exit package. Reports suggest that he made the matter much worse by denying the existence of the relationship.

Star turned pariah

Didier Laurent, a former Vice President at Nestlé, posted on LinkedIn: "I have known Laurent Freixe for nearly 40 years. In my books, he is a "good human

“ This was a necessary decision. Nestlé’s values and governance are strong foundations of our company

Paul Bulcke, chairman, Nestlé

being””. His post continued: “Why did he lie to the Board about this special relationship with a woman directly reporting to him? I believe that if he had played it in a transparent way he might have saved his position as Nestlé's CEO.

“A major misconduct deserving a major sanction – and he got it. After four decades of an outstanding career culminating at the helm of the world's largest food company, being fired with immediate effect, must be devastating. But this is justice. A star last week, a pariah this week... As the ancient Romans said, ‘it is but a short step from the Capitol to the Tarpeian Rock’.”

A spokesperson for Nestlé said: “We acted at all times in line with best practice corporate governance. The external investigation was opened shortly after the initial

knew; but no one said anything. Eventually, someone did. It's hard being a whistleblower – that's the best strategy to lose your job and be earmarked for the rest of your life.”

After Freixe's dismissal, Nestlé Chairman Paul Bulcke said: “This was a necessary decision. Nestlé's values and governance are strong foundations of our company.” Mr Bulcke and independent director Pablo Isla oversaw the inquiry into Mr Freixe “with the support of independent outside counsel”.

According to the FT, claims were initially made in May 2025 when the SFr190bn group behind brands including Kit Kat and Nescafé first launched an internal investigation. But they were found to be unsubstantiated. The complaints persisted and another broader



internal investigation, and today's decision shows that we are taking allegations and investigations seriously."

Of course, there are other examples of prominent CEOs being dismissed following investigations into their personal relationships with colleagues.

Bernard Looney, former CEO of British energy giant BP resigned with immediate effect in 2023, after admitting that he had not been "fully transparent" about several historical relationships involving colleagues. BP said that its board had received and reviewed allegations from an anonymous source relating to Looney's conduct "in respect of personal

"The public sees that if something happens at a high level, it's investigated – that's a good thing"

Christian Oetiker, managing partner, Vischer

relationships with company colleagues".

In 2019, McDonald's fired its CEO Steve Easterbrook for having a consensual relationship with an employee and violating company policy against manager-subordinate relationships.

Subsequent investigations revealed that he had lied about the extent of his misconduct, which involved multiple additional relationships. Following a lawsuit from McDonald's, Easterbrook eventually returned more than \$105 million in severance pay and equity. In 2023, he was also fined \$400,000 by the SEC for misleading investors.

More questions than answers

So, what lessons can be learned for best practice corporate governance in Switzerland?

Vischer's managing partner Christian Oetiker says: "The public sees that if something happens at a high level, it's investigated – that's a good thing."

Walder Wyss' managing partner, Florian Gunz Niedermann, suggests that the Nestlé decision raises more questions than it provides answers. "It has led to a debate: what's an appropriate policy in a larger organisation for relationships?" he says. "Should we have rules and specific policies? Should we have a duty to notify if you have a relationship with someone? What counts as a relationship that needs to be notified?"

Bär & Karrer partner Eric Stupp says: "When something goes

"It has led to a debate: what's an appropriate policy in a larger organisation for relationships?"

Florian Gunz Niedermann, managing partner, Walder Wyss





Follow us:

The World.

Where we practise law.
Every day.

Lenz & Staehelin
The world's Swiss law firm

Follow us:

 [lenzandstaehelin](https://www.instagram.com/lenzandstaehelin)

 [Lenz & Staehelin](https://www.linkedin.com/company/lenz-staehelin)

lenzstaehelin.com



wrong, people are even more focused on risk limitation than preserving a business-friendly regulation. Things do happen. Even with good corporate governance, there is no recipe to totally avoid a crisis. Society has to learn again: where there's risk, mistakes can happen; but without risk, you're basically a rather poor country."

At Homburger, corporate partner Frank Gerhard adds: "These things are not new; they're probably as old as human beings – when people spend their entire life at and for the company. In terms of uncovering those things, Switzerland has probably been a late comer to the party." And the bottom line? "The number one food company feeding the world. Don't mess with that legacy or reputation."

More investigations and disputes

Schellenberg disputes partner Matthias Gstoehl, notes: "We're seeing more investigations and disputes around corporate governance. Nestlé was not a game changer, because transparency and accountability have already become a key topic. Companies are really trying to do the

“ Companies have to adjust. Standards change, so do ethics; and what they mean can change really quickly

Juerg Bloch, managing partner, Niederer Kraft and Frey

maximum – that leads to an increase in governance-related investigations and sanctioning individuals when there is a finding."

The following critique is offered by Juerg Bloch, managing partner at Niederer Kraft and Frey, who is a specialist in this area.

"What can you do from a compliance perspective to prevent the next crisis?" he asks. "That's the million-dollar question. The answer is process: compliance, regulatory frameworks always develop continuously. Companies have to adjust. Standards change, so do ethics; and what they mean can change really quickly."

The most important thing, he suggests, is to have stability, "based on certain values

that you want your company to live up to. That has to be transferred into everyday decisions by top management, while ethics and values need to be transferred from the board of directors to senior management, and then down into the organisation."

Profit and compliance

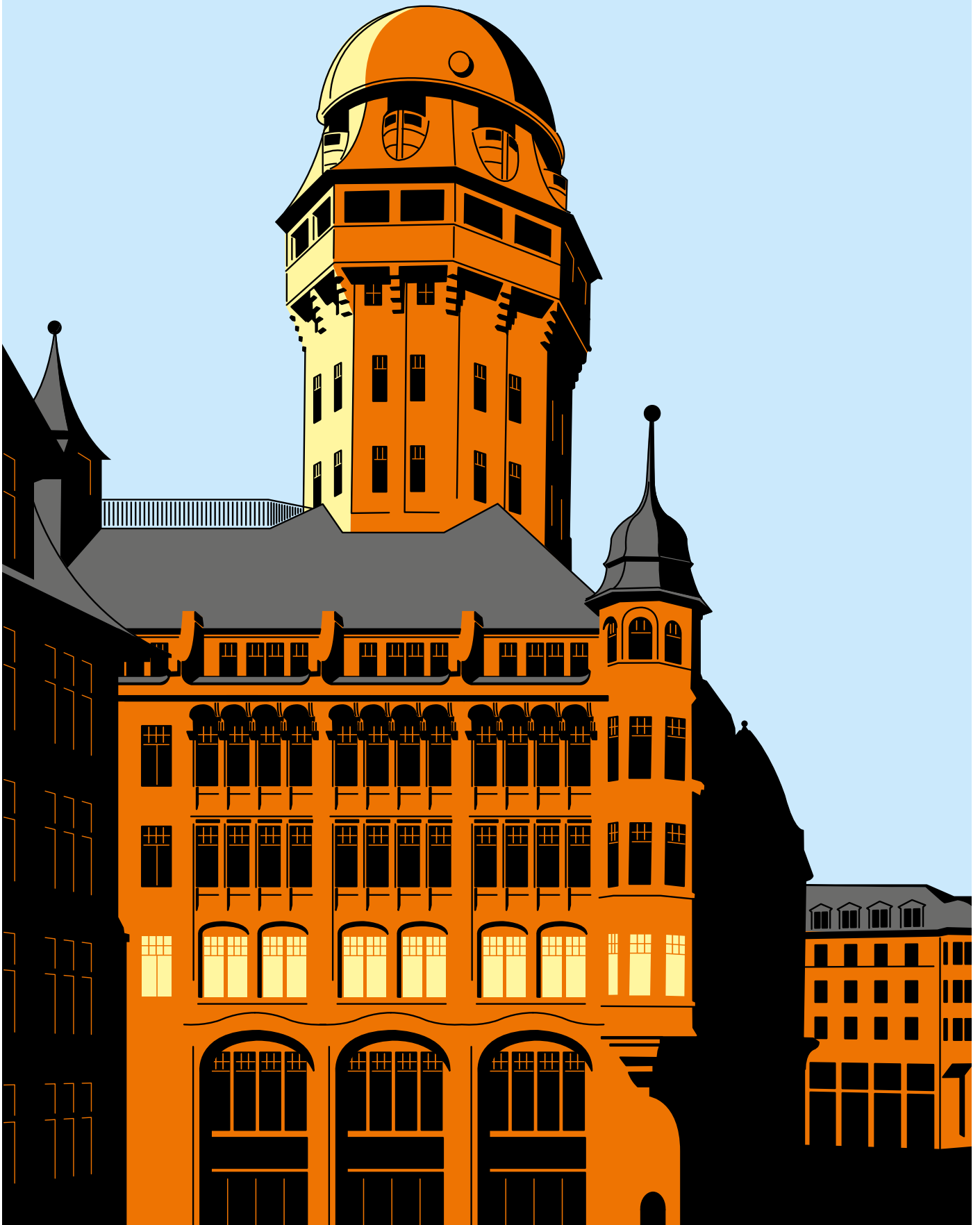
So, how is that best achieved?

"You have to empower your department heads, your chief compliance officer and their team, as well as internal audit and the legal department, so they have a say. Ultimately, companies need to be profitable and not just create the best compliance in the world. The challenge is to reconcile the compliance perspective with the pursuit of profitability to achieve sustainable business success built on a healthy compliance culture.

"Many corporates know what they can do, what they should do, what they're allowed to do, and at the same time, have a strong set of values that come from within and not from rules imposed from outside, to know what kind of business they want to do and who they want to be." ●



ADVESTRA THE SMALL BIG LAW FIRM.



No to a Switzerland with 10 million!



Dominic Carman

Is Switzerland overcrowded? That is the critical question which Swiss citizens recently had to decide when voting on a proposed Sustainability Initiative to cap the country's population at 10 million.

According to census data, Switzerland has 226 people per km² making it quite similar in population density to two of its immediate neighbours: Germany (243 per km²) is slightly higher while Italy (199 per km²) is slightly lower. But for the populist Swiss People's Party (SVP), which has been the largest parliamentary party since 1999 and currently holds 62 out of 200 seats on the Swiss National Council, such density is too high.

Radical proposal

Thomas Matter, a prominent banker and SVP politician, summarised his party's position: "We are not against immigration, but it has to be moderate and controlled so we bring in the right people. Before we had qualitative immigration, now we

There was relief that Swiss voters rejected a proposed population cap, but the relatively narrow victory suggests there might be further trouble ahead

have quantitative immigration. Switzerland is still the same size as it was in 1848, and more and more people are living in the same space."

No other country has ever tried to implement a hard limit on the number of residents. But on 14th June, a referendum was held enabling Swiss citizens to vote on the radical proposal – No to a Switzerland with 10 million! (Sustainability Initiative) – which would cap the permanent resident population until 2050.

Under the Swiss system of direct democracy, popular initiatives are put to a referendum if they get 100,000 backers within 18 months. "Switzerland is the only country that regularly asks its citizens to vote," explains

Frank Gerhard, corporate partner at Homburger.

Today, the Swiss population stands at 9.1 million – up from 7.3 million when free movement of people between Switzerland and the EU first came into effect in June 2002. Notably, 27% of Swiss residents were born abroad making them ineligible to vote. Under the country's stringent naturalization laws, obtaining citizenship is a lengthy and difficult process.

According to official projections, the 10 million threshold will be passed by the early 2040s. Once the figure reaches 9.5 million, the SVP-led proposal required the government to take measures such as limiting the number of residency permits and refugees who are granted asylum.



Population surge

Given that Switzerland faces a steadily ageing population with a record low fertility rate of 1.29 children per woman, it is no surprise that more than 80% of Swiss population growth over the past 25 years has been driven by immigration. That demographic change seems likely to continue.

The SVP claims that immigration is over-stretching local infrastructure, roads and public transport, driving up rents and crime, and putting the Swiss way of life under unbearable strain. Although the Swiss rate of population growth is certainly much faster than that of surrounding EU member states, there is an equally strong counter argument.

More than half of all Swiss products are sold into the EU, but access to European markets depends on Swiss commitment to free movement. By directly linking the Swiss population total to constitutional obligations, the initiative would jeopardise a range of bilateral relations with the EU, including the free movement agreement. As a result, Switzerland could potentially become isolated, with profoundly damaging economic consequences.

Establishment opposition

Almost without exception, the

“ In terms of immigration, we invite people here because we have jobs to offer – that’s the reality

Frank Gerhard, corporate partner, Homburger

Swiss establishment opposed the initiative.

A majority of the country’s seven-member government, comprised of ministers from the four biggest political parties including the SVP, was firmly against. They warned that it would threaten national stability, harm the economy and damage Swiss prosperity. Majorities in both houses of parliament recommended rejecting the proposal, as did the Swiss Employers’ Association, the Swiss trade union federation, and Economiesuisse, the largest umbrella organisation for Swiss business.

Speaking shortly before the referendum vote took place, several prominent Swiss lawyers offered their perspective.

“People see Switzerland as different from every other country,” says Gerhard. “The [Initiative] supporters argue: let’s pause, the population has grown 25% in the

last 25 years; whereas Germany, for instance, has only grown by 3% in that time. But in terms of immigration, we invite people here because we have jobs to offer – that’s the reality. It’s finely balanced, and could put a break on the economy – first as a signal, and then in terms of workforce coming in.”

Christian Oetiker, managing partner at Vischer, notes: “There have been similar votes before, which were defeated. If we start ending free movement, we would find a solution to the problem of numbers, but it will, in some part, destroy our relationship with the EU. It’s not a good moment to do that. Although the parties behind this referendum have dreamt of this for years, they advocate free trade agreements with the EU and other countries – that’s their dream.

Corporate world divided

He adds: “Brexit was largely a protest vote. Given this example, many people will ultimately say, “Am I sure that this will not have a negative impact on me and my children?” They will then decide on that basis. I’m confident that in the end there will be a ‘no’, but it’s going to be close.”

Echoing the point, Swiss Justice Minister Beat Jans told the Tribune de Geneve newspaper that “the



stakes are very high,” warning that the vote could provoke the equivalent of a Swiss Brexit.

NKF managing partner, Juerg Bloch, says: “Look at the history of Switzerland: initiatives like these have a lot to do with preservation of values, stability and moving slower. The corporate world is quite divided. But where will the labour come from, and how can you manage without it?”

Eric Stupp, partner at Bär & Karrer, notes: “Many people are in favour and it will probably be a tight race, but I hope it won’t pass. The initiative is not good from a growth perspective, but it’s good that such matters can openly be discussed in Switzerland.”

Narrow victory

As Swiss lawyers predicted, the SVP-backed initiative was defeated. But not by that much. On 14 June 2026, Swiss voters rejected it by 54.79% to 45.21% – the same margin as the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, which the Scottish National Party is seeking to re-run.

Although relatively narrow, this victory is certainly good for business, and arguably for Switzerland too. But inevitably, further division will remain.

“ The initiative is not good from a growth perspective, but it’s good that such matters can openly be discussed in Switzerland

**Eric Stupp, partner,
Bär & Karrer**

Fuelled by concerns over housing, infrastructure, and migration, a similar proposal could gain traction in future which leaves no room for complacency.

Again, neighbouring countries provide a useful benchmark. Although nationalist rhetoric and xenophobic campaigns have been prominent in Switzerland for several decades, largely predating the resurgence of far-right parties in France and Germany, there is creeping political impact from both countries.

Support continues to surge for France’s Rassemblement National (RN) and Germany’s Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) with both populist parties placing an anti-immigration agenda at the heart of their offering to voters.

Mainstream politics, media and

big business may treat them as pariahs. But in the most recent INSA poll, 35% of respondents indicated that they could vote for the AfD at Germany’s 2029 federal election. Meanwhile in the September 2026 Saxony-Anhalt state parliament election, the AfD currently looks set for a clear win – and potentially, an outright majority.

Seismic events

Similarly, Geneva may be a model of urbane elegance and cosmopolitan sophistication. But just over the border, the RN’s Jordan Bardella remains the marginal favourite to win next year’s French presidential election.

It may be different, but Switzerland is not entirely cocooned from potentially seismic political events that might occur in its two largest neighbours: electoral success at a national level for either the RN or AfD could serve to amplify the anti-immigration mood on Swiss soil. Historically, the AfD looked to the SVP for political inspiration: in future, that may begin to work the other way.

Given the result of the June 2026 Sustainability Initiative, it is worth bearing in mind that only five per cent of Swiss voters would need to change their mind for a comparable proposal to succeed at a future referendum. ●

NKF

Your partner for the most challenging legal matters

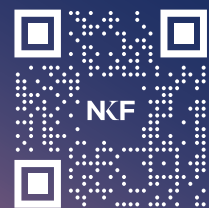
NIEDERER KRAFT FREY

Zurich

Niederer Kraft Frey Ltd
Bahnhofstrasse 53
CH-8001 Zurich

Geneva

Niederer Kraft Frey Ltd
Place de l'Université 8
CH-1205 Geneva



Get to know us

The \$1tn question:

How are Swiss law firms planning their AI future?

Dominic Carman

The recent SpaceX debut on Nasdaq was a global news story. Surpassing the previous record held by Saudi Aramco and having acquired xAI, another Elon Musk startup, SpaceX raised \$85bn in its IPO, resulting in a company valuation of \$2.1tn after its first day of public trading.

The ultimate goal of launching up to 1m scalable, solar-powered data centres in space may be some way off, but the really big headlines of the moment belong to Musk himself: the first man to become a dollar trillionaire, he is now worth \$1.4tn whereas a decade ago, his net worth hovered around the \$14bn mark. For context, this puts Musk's wealth well above the entire GDP (\$1.15tn) of Switzerland – one of

As Elon Musk's total wealth hits the \$1.4tn mark to surpass Switzerland's annual GDP, how and where does AI fit in the Swiss legal landscape?

only 21 countries whose annual GDP exceeds \$1tn, according to the IMF.

When the GDP of the world's 20th largest economy, ranked third for GDP per capita, can be surpassed by one man's accumulated wealth in this century, then where will AI take us next?

As big companies swiftly pivot towards agentic AI systems that are capable of complex, autonomous reasoning and actions, they are looking to raise record sums in a race to secure

public funding for advanced AI development: rivals OpenAI (creator of ChatGPT) and Anthropic (maker of Claude, Fable and Mythos) have both filed for IPOs, targeting \$1tn valuations.

We are, of course, only at the beginning of the AI journey. According to Goldman Sachs, a total of \$7.6tn in aggregate capital expenditure (CapEx) will be needed across the global AI ecosystem within the next five years as baseline CapEx climbs from \$765bn in 2026 to over \$1.6tn annually by 2031.

Bigger steps

Incrementally, law firms are beginning to step up to AI's challenges and opportunities across the legal sector. To automate document review, legal research, and drafting, a proliferation of internal, proprietary AI chatbots is matched by increasing use of Harvey, Legora and other enterprise-grade generative AI platforms.

Some global firms have already taken bigger steps.

Kirkland & Ellis, the world's highest-grossing law firm, has committed \$500 million to build its own proprietary AI platform, partnering with Palantir to launch an AI-led Private Equity Fundraising Engine. Meanwhile, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer has partnered with Anthropic to deploy the Claude family of models across its 33 global offices, giving 5,700 employees secure access to AI-powered legal platforms.

So, where do Swiss law firms fit in the global equation?

"There's a technological tsunami," says Homburger corporate partner, Frank Gerhard. "You can read that Anthropic is going to kill all the lawyers; before that, it was ChatGPT. But lawyers are extremely versatile: they can dance on one foot, three feet, or whatever's needed when the dance floor opens. Currently, it's good if you can dance on one foot when you consider everything."

AI is the number one topic for Swiss lawyers, suggests Gerhard. "How AI is changing their work – that's lawyers' biggest fear now," he says. "Once clients use AI free of barriers, they are their own client. When that happens, we will only be here to do judgment and validation of liability and for projects."

Deep Judge-Harvey partnership

Eric Stupp, head of Bär & Karrer's financial services department,



“ I work with AI on a daily basis, I love it – AI is a great help

Thierry Calame, co-managing partner, Lenz & Staehelin

develops the point. "The AI technology challenge is huge: we're just at the beginning, and no one has an idea what it really means for our society," he says.

He ventures to predict what AI will eventually mean for law firms. "What will happen is that more repetitive, easier tasks will be eaten up by AI," says Stupp. "But I expect that the demand for strategic advice will go up. This may not fully compensate for the loss of some of the work which will may fall away in future. But outstanding lawyers with strong capabilities shouldn't be worried at all. And we should not forget that every technological revolution brought new opportunities which no-one anticipated at the outset."

Zurich is an aspiring AI hub – both Google and Microsoft have prominent local operations. There

are also "many spin-offs and highly sought after graduates from the Swiss Institute of Technology, ETH," says Lenz & Staehelin's co-managing partner, Thierry Calame.

In May, Harvey announced a partnership with Zurich-based legal AI start-up DeepJudge, whose prominent law firm investors include Homburger and Lenz. Founded in 2021, DeepJudge is designed to bring law firm and in-house expertise into AI-powered legal work. The platform enables Swiss lawyers to integrate their previous work and decision making into Harvey's workflows, which helps them to research, draft and analyse with AI as well as their own institutional knowledge accumulated over decades of practice experience.

"I love AI"

Calame enthuses: "I work with AI on a daily basis, I love it – AI is a great help." He also sees AI as a huge opportunity. "We're investing heavily. In terms of AI tools, we use DeepJudge – we have an on-premise LLM with them to make better leverage



of our combined know-how database from all three offices together," he says. "We're also using Harvey and are constantly exploring other options."

And return on investment? "It's important – how are we going to get that ROI?" he says. "It's a widely discussed topic: whether AI will change the business model of law firms that have traditionally been based on time spent. AI requires a lot of investment, but it will help to make our work more efficient, and to improve the quality of the product. The impact of AI on pricing is something we're actively working on. We are reviewing our value proposition and exploring alternative fee models, including value-based fees and other client-specific pricing arrangement to achieve payback on our investments."

Chair of Pestalozzi, Christoph Lang, adds: "Before AI, clients had become more selective on due diligence exercises. Now, they leverage new technologies. How

“ AI will, of course, change things. In daily work, the devil is still in the detail, so how does it play out when working with these tools? ”

Christoph Lang, chair, Pestalozzi

much will it transform what we do? AI will, of course, change things. In daily work, the devil is still in the detail, so how does it play out when working with these tools?

"We're still in the early stages. Startups and tech companies that try to sell lawyer-specific AI tools versus the generic tools that everybody knows with the latest being Claude and ChatGPT. For many applications, these generic tools will ultimately prevail. Harvey, Legora, or Draftwise will have a hard time keeping up with the development of more generic

tools, where they have greater financial means to develop further."

AI: "a hyped topic"

Some Swiss law firms do things differently.

"We don't use Harvey or Legora after feedback from our data team," says Christian Oetiker, managing partner at Vischer. "They used AI for making automated assessments of contracts and then integrating that into Office, so we started using AI relatively intensively. We're still very active. David Rosenthal and his (data and technology) team have developed a tool called Red Ink (redink.ai), which allows you to integrate AI into your MS Office environment. It's now a separate legal entity, which offers services you can buy." Currently, 40 law firms and accounting firms use redink.ai.

"We don't have our own AI, but we have a "frame", which allows us to exceed the various motors, directly from our Office environment – a relatively quick, continuous process that started two years ago," says Oetiker. "When I receive presentations from AI providers, I can tell that most of what they do is also "framing": they provide a nice frame, an opportunity to upload data, and then to analyse it. but the actual motor behind it, is always more or less the same."

One prominent lawyer is uncompromising. "AI is a hyped topic – the actual impact is very limited, even though many firms claim they're using it," he says. "There's a general consensus, but I'm very cautious in just believing what people say. I'm particularly cautious in taking the view of US firms, because they come from a rather different system. I've had many talks with US lawyers who have a case law-centric, research-centric way of working, which we don't. It's logical that they can



be almost fully replaced by AI, whereas the way we work, it's less apparent that this will happen."

Another partner at a different firm adds: "I believe it's going to make us more efficient, so we can do more, maybe with less people. In our experience, there's no reasonable use of AI without human oversight, because the risk is just too great and AI mistakes can be significant."

Healthy scepticism

Although less dismissive, others remain sceptical. At Prager Dreifuss, managing partner Daniel Hayek is among their number.

"Bigger competitors are heavily invested in AI," he says. "But these generic tools are not used enough by lawyers, because they don't produce reliable results. It's not developed enough for Swiss law purposes. For research, it doesn't really work because it makes so many mistakes. It can't tell the difference between a federal law enacted five years ago and the cantonal law of Zurich. The output is often simply inaccurate: it mixes old cases with new cases. You can't rely on it and it doesn't work in research yet. It produces text which reads well – it's perfectly written, but the content is inaccurate. In our

“ Bigger competitors are heavily invested in AI but these generic tools are not used enough by lawyers, because they don't produce reliable results. It's not developed enough for Swiss law purposes

Daniel Hayek, managing partner, Prager Dreifuss

profession, that's the dangerous part."

Hayek adds: "Where you can use it is to get up to speed in litigation very quickly: the discovery process with all the relevant documents summarized. That works extremely well – always with our lawyers reviewing the output, of course. You can also use AI to produce a very good email to a client with bullet points, or in litigation, a time overview of what's happened in the last four years. That's our short-term focus."

Florian Gunz Niedermann, managing partner of Walder Wyss, sings from a similar hymn

sheet. "There's much discussion around how AI will impact the profession," he says. "Many law firms are exploring the use of AI technologies. From our perspective, the meaningful and productive implementation of such tools is still in the early stages in many places. We have tested various tools and do not see their USP. We believe that we can differentiate ourselves by building our own skills and workflows, ideally in partnership with like-minded firms."

"We're still hiring"

Several law firms identify a common AI-related challenge.

At Schellenberg, banking partner Caroline Clemetson says: "The biggest challenge ahead for law firms is the skillset of future lawyers. How are we going to have people with sufficient judgment and experience, who have used AI from a young age? How do you train young lawyers to become senior lawyers with judgment, regardless of the technology, and the necessary skills?"

Lang concurs. "The big concern: once people use those tools, they are no longer developing their professional experience the hard way, piling



through large volumes of documents,” he says. “How will young lawyers gain the necessary level of experience for developing their own judgment? That’s the biggest challenge.”

Stupp broadens the focus. “So, how do we develop the next generation? It’s any company; not a law firm specific issue. How do we develop them, because you often learn by starting with the easy stuff and doing things from scratch. The development of people, talent – that’s the key topic.”

In addition to equipping future lawyers with the right blend of legal and AI skills, there is an unspoken fear that fewer young lawyers may be needed in future – and that future is not very far away. The “Big Four” accounting firms provide an obvious reference point for AI-related reduction in recruitment. Over the past two years, Deloitte, EY, KPMG, and PwC have reduced graduate recruitment by anywhere from 6% to 29%. Further reductions are anticipated.

Against this background, NKF’s managing partner Juerg Bloch remains pragmatic.

“ You don’t need to go to work for Mr Zuckerberg in Menlo Park, you can also make a great life here. It’s important to get this message across

Frank Gerhard, corporate partner, Homburger

“We’ve had excellent years in terms of work and revenues – we still need associates and junior associates, and we aren’t reducing numbers; we’re still hiring,” he says. “We have to react to the workload as far as we can foresee. At the same time, we are monitoring the situation closely and remain flexible. We are committed and excited to integrate the possibilities of AI in our work, enhancing both quality and efficiency. We have strategic discussions, and hundreds of use cases in our daily work. Whatever we do involves AI, using (among others) Legora, Harvey or Copilot.

But we also consider [the future of] our internal organisation.”

Cri de couer

Calame identifies AI regulation as a potential differentiator for Switzerland.

“Switzerland is currently developing its approach to AI regulation, he says. “In February 2025, the Federal Council decided not to introduce a Swiss equivalent of the EU AI Act, or to mirror the EU’s horizontal regulatory model. Instead, Switzerland intends to pursue a more targeted, sector-specific and technology-neutral approach, building where necessary on existing laws and focusing in particular on the ratification and implementation of the Council of Europe AI Convention. The EU AI Act remains relevant and influential, especially for Swiss companies operating in or targeting the EU market, but Switzerland’s own regulatory approach is expected to be more limited, flexible and innovation-friendly.”

Gerhard concludes with a cri de couer.

“AI and AI startups are very important,” he says. “The best tech schools in Europe are in the UK and Switzerland: Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial, Zurich and Lausanne. In an all-tech world, those schools are currently decisive for our own future. We are concerned that they are still able to produce great technology and attract foreign students.

“Outside the US, the best students of the world should come to these universities and some others – and then stay, rather than go to Silicon Valley. So, please stay here: we have finance, we have the framework, a good environment and exit possibilities. You don’t need to go to work for Mr Zuckerberg in Menlo Park, you can also make a great life here. It’s important to get this message across.” ●

Homburger

Swiss core.
Global scope.

homburger.ch



Uncertainty: *The new normal*



Dominic Carman

Agreeing to an official ceremony in Geneva for the signing of a peace agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) with Iran was distinctly ironic. Over the past year, President Trump has had a great deal to say about Swiss trade, Swiss tariffs, and Swiss leaders – much of it expressed in a tone that was characteristically bellicose rather than pacific. Wisely, the US president decided at the last minute to sign the agreement over the dinner table at Versailles Palace instead.

Unwisely, his previous comments have included: “Without the United States, Switzerland would no longer be Switzerland.” (WEF 2026, Davos); “They arrive, they sell their watches, no customs duties, they go home, and they

Professional adaptability has become a defining national characteristic, so how are repeated external shocks impacting the resilience of Swiss lawyers?

earn \$41 billion in the process... They should pay much more.” (WEF 2026, Davos); “She (former Swiss President Karin Keller-Sutter) just rubbed me the wrong way... so I made it 39%.” Re: raising the tariff rate from 30% to 39% in August 2025 (NYT 2026).

Notwithstanding these statements, the US and Switzerland managed to negotiate a trade framework that eventually lowered tariffs on Swiss goods to 15%. Beyond the direct impact of tariffs on Swiss businesses, the Iran conflict has further disrupted

global trade and energy supplies, creating supply chain problems and inflationary pressures.

Turbulent times

Faced with indirect consequences of these challenges, Swiss lawyers nevertheless remain stoic and positive. “Uncertainty has become a certainty,” says Christian Oetiker, managing partner of Vischer.

At Schellenberg Wittmer, banking partner Caroline Clemetson adds: “Given the growing international uncertainty – the Ukraine war, US tariffs,

and now Iran – certain sectors are impacted and need to adapt to the new general regulatory environment created by those events. Some clients manage without being impacted, others have to adapt.”

Christoph Lang, chair of Pestalozzi, develops the point. “For some time, geopolitical difficulties have been a defining backdrop for our clients,” he says. “They’ve adjusted to ongoing uncertainty so that it becomes normal after a time. Clients realise that they need to adjust – and so, we see that in more activity in restructuring supply chains, building regional resilience, to be ready for a less globalised world, and testing their financing structures”.

Elsewhere, opinions vary on the impact of external events.

Homburger’s multiple award-winning corporate M&A partner Frank Gerhard says: “It’s a challenging environment to do business. What’s happening in the Middle East, and also our relationships with the US and with Europe, it’s very tense. As a law firm, unfortunately, we just piggyback on what’s out there. We’re not trendsetters, we are trend followers.”

At Lenz & Staehelin, co-managing partner Thierry Calame suggests that we live in very turbulent times. “Geopolitical challenges are affecting Swiss law firms and their clients,” he says. “Given the challenges, it’s surprising how little our business has been affected. We had a really good year last year and Q1 this year was equally good.”

Juerg Bloch, managing partner at NKF, is similarly upbeat. “Overall, we had an outstanding year – the consequences for the transactional side were limited,” he says.

“The regulatory compliance department and transactional work were very busy. We’ve been very lucky, or we did a good job, so we have a very good pipeline. Our commitment is to be there



“ Given the growing international uncertainty – the Ukraine war, US tariffs, and now Iran – certain sectors are impacted and need to adapt to the new general regulatory environment created by those events

Caroline Clemetson, banking partner, Schellenberg Wittmer

for our clients when the pressure is greatest – and our expertise, are designed precisely for these moments. In times of crisis, complexity rises – and so does the need for trusted counsel.” He points to recent partner hires in real estate – Fabiano Menghini in Zurich and Charles Gschwind in Geneva as evidence of growing demand.

Eric Stupp, head of Bär & Karrer’s financial services department, is keen to broaden the discussion. “It’s not (just) about Donald Trump,” he says.

“Global shifts are tectonic, much less connected with a single person: demographic changes, huge technology changes, other countries becoming stronger, and in particular, the level of debt built up in the West: Europe, the UK, the US.”

How, therefore, does he think Switzerland should respond? “The same way Switzerland has previously reacted: to maintain the existing model,” says Stupp. “Probably a smart move, because the more the world is changing, the more appreciated stable and predictable places like Switzerland are.”

Safe haven

Switzerland’s long-established reputation as a bedrock of stability makes it synonymous with the term ‘safe-haven.’ Arguably, this is most apparent in the sustained strength of its currency. Since January 2025, the Swiss franc has appreciated by a further 3% against the euro and by a whopping 15% against the US dollar.

So, has there been an exodus of capital and people to Switzerland?

“If Middle-East jurisdictions lose their reputation as a safe harbour, then people will swiftly relocate,”



says Oetiker. Before the current Trump administration, Swiss multinationals thought about more investments into the US, according to Lang. "To some degree, that has been counterbalanced by an inflow of investment, of companies seeking stability in a neutral jurisdiction," he says.

Gerhard notes: "The Iran war has been disruptive for the global economy. But Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia continue their investment (in Switzerland) as part of their strategic asset allocation and diversification."

In terms of people who had previously moved to the Emirates, he suggests: "There's been some repatriation, although not as much as might be expected when bombs are falling. For many individuals, tax policies in Europe are difficult to accept. Everyone can now launch a business remotely from everywhere. Whenever there are crises around the world, Switzerland has been a net beneficiary, and that trend will not change quickly."

Stupp adds: "It's not just the UAE, but the whole region – Oman, Saudi Arabia, even Qatar. In the rich Gulf states, geopolitics became apparent, so people are keen to diversify risks and

“ We’ve often benefited from uncertainty, but not now. We have to realise that the larger players don’t care what we think – they just do (what they want) ”

Florian Gunz Niedermann, co-managing partner, Walder Wyss

looking for additional secure spots. That started before the Iran war: probably one reason why a number of wealthy individuals are considering or wanting to open a family office in Switzerland. But the Gulf states will continue to prosper."

Bloch cautions: "Clients need to remain flexible; insecurity has become part of our world. When crisis hits the Middle East, there's movement of money, of clients into a safe haven, a beacon of stability. We've seen relocations from businesses and individuals, not only for tax reasons, but for stability reasons. The more there's instability, the more people look at stable jurisdictions – not just for economic reasons, but also

because we have the rule of law, a stable system where you can enforce a claim."

Florian Gunz Niedermann, co-managing partner of Walder Wyss, suggests that Switzerland being seen as a beacon of stability is problematic. "We're always less affected than others, so we adopt a more relaxed approach," he says. "We've often benefited from uncertainty, but not now. We have to realise that the larger players don't care what we think – they just do (what they want). We need to acknowledge that we're going to be on the lower end of the food chain in certain regards: for some of us, it's a new experience."

UBS hangover

In terms of the Swiss domestic market, Gerhard offers an objective summary.

"When an investment banker or lawyer says: a solid year, but not outstanding," he muses, "that's a nice way of saying it wasn't great."

"Some practice areas are in sync with the economy – M&A, capital markets, financing. Look at the list of published deals: it's okay, but could be much better. In the transactional market, we're really dependent on events. The equity capital markets in Switzerland for new issuers have been more or less closed since the Galderma IPO in 2024. Litigation guys have their fair share: they go high when they have a big case, and low when they have no cases. But the number of cases is not related to the economy, but rather the Gaussian curve (bell curve).

"A homemade financial crisis is still going on: the post Credit Suisse-UBS merger – everybody in Switzerland has friends who work, or worked, in those banks. Supposedly, the last dismissals were in March, three years after the merger was signed." Gerhard anticipates that the Swiss financial sector will continue to struggle. "It will be interesting to see how UBS deals with the

PRAGER DREIFUSS

ATTORNEYS AT LAW



CH-8008 Zurich | CH-3001 Bern | BE-1050 Brussels

www.prager-dreifuss.com

new capital adequacy rules,” he says. “They may soften because there’s a strong UBS lobby within Parliament.”

It may no longer be making international headlines, but domestic fallout from the UBS-Credit Suisse merger continues. UBS officially acquired its longtime rival in June 2023, followed by the swiftly executed legal merger which was completed in May 2024. Today, The Swiss government still holds significant influence over the merged entity, not least because UBS now controls a balance sheet that is equivalent to double the size of Switzerland’s GDP. Strict capital requirements apply amid ongoing legislative and litigation battles.

“Using one big bank has an impact,” says Oetiker. “For us, it is not that big, so far. But if you are a business with a constant need for financing – that’s an issue. For Switzerland, having one even larger bank is also an issue in terms of risk. It’s a risk cluster. In the past, both banks had their issues; next time, the issue will be even bigger.”

AT1 bondholders

In March 2023, AT1 bondholders lost out during the government-brokered emergency rescue of Credit Suisse by UBS. Under the rescue deal, Credit Suisse shareholders received compensation; AT1 bondholders did not. Controversially, the Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority (FINMA) wrote down approximately \$17.8bn of Credit Suisse AT1 bonds to zero.

Multiple strands of litigation and international arbitration have since proliferated, involving thousands of aggrieved bondholders taking action against the Swiss state and FINMA.

In October 2025, a Swiss Federal Administrative Court ruled that FINMA’s decision to wipe out the bonds was unlawful, stating there it had no legal basis.



“ All the big law firm players in Switzerland found their position, working for Credit Suisse, UBS, or the Swiss government

Juerg Bloch, managing partner, NKF

Although Switzerland’s highest court provisionally suspended this annulment pending a final verdict, it has nevertheless provided a significant boost to investor claims.

“Usually, stakeholders take positions very quickly to preserve their rights,” says Bloch. “All the big law firm players in Switzerland found their position, working for Credit Suisse, UBS, or the Swiss government.”

The AT1 claims created a lot of work, much of which continues. Although several firms were conflicted because of ongoing relationships with UBS – described by commentators as a “minefield” because conflict was a constant issue – circumstances have since changed. But even though the

situation has evolved as things have become clearer, it remains delicate. For FINMA, which is fully aware of all prior relationships, it remains a balancing act to decide where a firm can advise and where it cannot.

Vischer is among those firms which have been involved throughout. “We’re representing quite a big chunk (of AT1 bondholders), together with Quinn Emanuel,” says Oetiker. “In a positive judgment, the Swiss administrative court took an unusual approach hearing a case on behalf of very few claimants and a very small law firm (Haberbeck) was involved. There’s some concern in the AT 1 world that the court, by doing this, was not taking the strongest of those challenging the decision, but one of the smallest outfits.”

In addition to Quinn Emanuel, which leads the largest coalition of bondholders, Pallas Partners is representing numerous investors in challenges against FINMA. Meanwhile, Holman Fenwick Willan is bringing claims against the Swiss government through the World Bank’s international arbitration court, and Withers and Drew & Napier are collaborating on international treaty arbitration claims for multiple Asian bondholders.

Bär & Karrer is acting as defence counsel for UBS in the AT1 bond litigations currently before the Swiss Federal Administrative Court. In related matters, Lenz, Homburger, NKF (as counsel to the Swiss Confederation) and Schellenberg have all been involved in advising relevant parties at different stages.

FINMA, FDI Screening

“Since the Credit Suisse-UBS crisis, FINMA has significantly increased its regulatory scrutiny both with large institutions and smaller institutions, asset managers, etc.,” says Bloch. “Our regulatory enforcement team has a lot of



Shifting gears towards your future

We do not rest on our laurels. As an innovative Swiss law firm, we keep moving forward to provide you with excellence.



**Schellenberg
Wittmer**
Attorneys at Law



work, while our private client guys and tax department are very busy. Banking regulatory and compliance has also been very busy. The environment for financial institutions is becoming increasingly demanding, which is leading to adjustments in business models and the debanking of certain bank clients. We see a growing number of regulatory questions from financial institutions seeking guidance on how to navigate these changes.”

To grant the agency a more robust regulatory toolbox, the Swiss Federal Council proposed significant legislative expansion, moving the regulator beyond basic compliance checks towards direct enforcement. This includes: the Manager Accountability Regime; the power to impose fines for compliance and governance failures; enhanced early intervention; increased transparency; stricter Anti-Money Laundering (AML) scrutiny; and tighter risk governance requirements.

“Following Credit Suisse, there was criticism,” explains Stupp. “Stefan Walter, FINMA’s CEO (since April 2024), has adopted a very strict approach. Internationally, the next Financial Action Task Force (FATF) inspection

“ There’s a shift towards disputes that originate in geopolitical tensions. Clients find themselves in a situation where a dispute is no longer just a piece of litigation or arbitration

Matthias Gstoehl, disputes partner, Schellenberg Wittmer

will start in 2027: the authorities want to be able to demonstrate that Switzerland has a robust AML oversight architecture. Our internal investigation enforcement practice has become very sizable. US-led investigation, FCPA, is rather quiet. But that’s offset by FINMA, which is very active in enforcement.”

Clemetson adds: “FINMA has the judgment when and when not to do enforcement. In terms of the financial sector’s reputation, it’s important to have a very competent and thorough supervisory authority. There’s greater activity in terms of enforcement, especially in the banking sector. There’s also been increased communication

of FINMA’s strategy regarding its enforcement activity.

“FCPA-led enforcement laid bare some of the big corporate scandals abroad. Where tainted money ends up in Switzerland, FINMA looks at it and opens a parallel regulatory investigation. Sanctions compliance is a big driver for regulatory supervision, and with that, more scrutiny on sanctions avoidance and money laundering related to sanctions.”

A new Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) screening regime is scheduled to enter into force next year, which applies exclusively to foreign state-controlled investors acquiring control of Swiss businesses. The new Swiss FDI regime introduces parameters for the financial and asset management sectors in “systemically important” financial institutions. Traditional private equity or private institutional asset managers are exempt.

“Swiss legislators are trying to encourage FDI, but are also working on an FDI screening regime,” says Calame. “The Syngenta takeover by ChemChina (in 2017) initially triggered the legislative process. Under the current draft, that takeover would not necessarily fall within the scope of the law as currently envisaged – an indication of how targeted the Swiss regime is likely to be compared with foreign screening systems. Switzerland is trying to do something, but not be overly restrictive, because FDI has always been very welcome.”

Stupp adds: “We’re only doing that because other countries are pushing us to, not because we want to. Government interference is not good: much of the country thinks that way. On the other hand, you need to protect access to key technologies.”

More disputes...

Beyond the slew of actions taken by AT1 bondholders, disputes and litigation are thriving elsewhere, as well investigations that sometimes

foreshadow them. "Litigation is very busy," confirms Stupp.

At Schellenberg, disputes partner Matthias Gstöhl notes: "There's a shift towards disputes that originate in geopolitical tensions. Clients find themselves in a situation where a dispute is no longer just a piece of litigation or arbitration. There's often an overlay of compliance issues, sanctions, criminal law. That's the new normal. The issues become so complex that they require an interdisciplinary, holistic approach to dispute resolution. You need to be able to manage complexity. That's what disputes are now about: the management of complexity; big disputes have multiple layers."

Bloch adds: "Litigation is difficult to predict, but uncertainty generally leads to disputes. Many cross-border disputes and arbitration work are coming to Switzerland. In times of crisis, disputes increase. Financial institutions have disputes with clients because of changing regulatory environments. Similarly, disruption of the supply chain due to geopolitical situations has consequences for the fulfillment of contracts, which naturally leads to renegotiations and, potentially, disputes that need to be settled."

He points to NKF's continued development in Geneva since its launch in January 2023: a strong local presence for the Zurich-based firm in French-speaking Switzerland.

"We've invested a lot in becoming a very strong player in the Geneva market," he says. "It's shown in terms of numbers, and recognition. We represented a Geneva-based commodity trading company in the first ever court proceeding for corruption of a foreign official that went to the Swiss Federal Criminal Court – a testament to what we've achieved in a very important case that received considerable media attention."

At Switzerland's largest firm, Calame, who is a prominent patent litigator and arbitrator, notes that Lenz has seen "significant growth in litigation, arbitration, and investigations. We've substantially increased our disputes sector in the past two years.

"We've been involved in a lot of investigations in the service sector and disputes have substantially increased. Our litigation and arbitration teams in Zurich and Geneva have been very busy: we do a lot of white-collar work and arbitration hearings are very active. Partners working in disputes: it's a high leverage compared to other practice areas. Other teams can support them."

...and deals aplenty

Despite Swiss lawyers bemoaning the relative absence of deals in recent months ("much less predictable: a less steady flow of transactions" and "public M&A is very difficult, affected by uncertainties"), last year is described by one managing partner as "fewer deals, but with higher value and strategically more compelling with very good utilization." Overall, there have been several significant transactions in which the leading players were involved. These include:

- The most notable transaction by size was last year's megadeal: Holcim's \$33.7bn spin-off of its North American business Amrize. Bär & Karrer was lead advisor to both Holcim and Amrize, handling corporate governance, M&A, capital markets, and tax structuring. Skadden was the lead US legal counsel, while Linklaters advised Holcim on debt financing and bond exchange transactions.
- In the \$10.8bn (CHF8.4bn) insurance "mega-merger of equals", Lenz was lead counsel to Baloise and Walder Wyss advised Helvetia. "By Swiss standards, a huge transaction – exactly the type

of strategic high value case we're happy to do," says Calame.

- Rieter acquired the Barmag textile machinery business from OC Oerlikon for CHF 850m. Lenz was lead Swiss counsel to Rieter; Homburger was the lead Swiss legal advisor to OC Oerlikon; and Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer acted as international and German/EU counsel to Rieter.
- Shift4, a US-based payment services provider, acquired Global Blue Group Holding for \$2.5bn. Loyens & Loeff advised Shift4 on the Swiss legal and tax aspects while Latham & Watkins was international legal advisor. NKF represented Global Blue and Simpson Thacher acted as their US legal counsel.
- SK Capital Partners acquired SwiXX BioPharma Holding in a deal valued at €1.5+bn. Bär & Karrer acted as the global lead counsel to SK Capital Partners; Walder Wyss was legal advisor to SwiXX BioPharma; and Homburger acted as counsel to Biocorp and the founders of Laboratorios Biopas, who were existing shareholders reinvesting alongside SK Capital.

Undecided

And now that peace is – hopefully, finally – on the horizon in the Middle East, what is the outlook for the second half of 2026?

Across sectors, there is much talk of healthcare, life sciences, and defence, and in terms of practice areas, disputes, investigations, white collar crime, and enforcement are commonly mentioned. M&A and private equity are always important while substantial growth in tax and technology-related work are also anticipated. These combine with professional optimism and an overall expectation that things will gradually improve for deals as disputes continue to thrive.

But in a time of uncertainty, Niedermann arguably delivers the best answer: "I'm not yet decided about the rest of the year." ●

Advestra spreads its wings



Dominic Carman

While lawyer recruitment remains in a consistent holding pattern at most Swiss law firms as they quietly consider how AI may trim future graduate numbers, Advestra continues to grow. Having spun off from Bär & Karrer and officially launched in January 2021, the firm was originally comprised of 20 lawyers, spearheaded by Thomas Reutter, together with partners Rashid Bahar, Daniel Raun, Roland Truffer, Annette Weber, Markus Muehleemann, Laurent Riedweg and Peter Riedweg.

Priding itself as “a team with no room for egos”, the initial focus was on Corporate/M&A, Capital Markets, Finance, Financial Services, and Tax. The firm has since tripled in size to include new practice areas: Dispute Resolution, Restructuring, Insolvency, and

Now in its sixth year of operation, the fastest-growing Swiss law firm with Gen Z appeal recently added disputes and employment to its client offering

Employment. Most recently, this has been facilitated by two key hires last October: disputes partner Lukas Rusch, who joined from Pestalozzi, and counsel Sharon Spring, who was Head of Employment Law and Senior Legal Counsel Litigation and Investigations at Zurich Insurance.

“Advestra already had a strong team, an established client base, and an excellent market reputation,” says Rusch. “This made building the disputes practice significantly more straightforward than starting from scratch. Initially, there were three

priorities: ensuring continuity for our clients, building the disputes team, and putting the right structure in place, including the necessary technology and know-how.”

Advestra focuses on corporate and commercial disputes, covering litigation, arbitration and investigations, where clients are both companies and entrepreneurs, primarily in life sciences and healthcare, banking and insurance, industrials, and telecommunications. “What has clearly increased in recent years is the volume of investigations,

driven by heightened compliance requirements,” says Rusch.

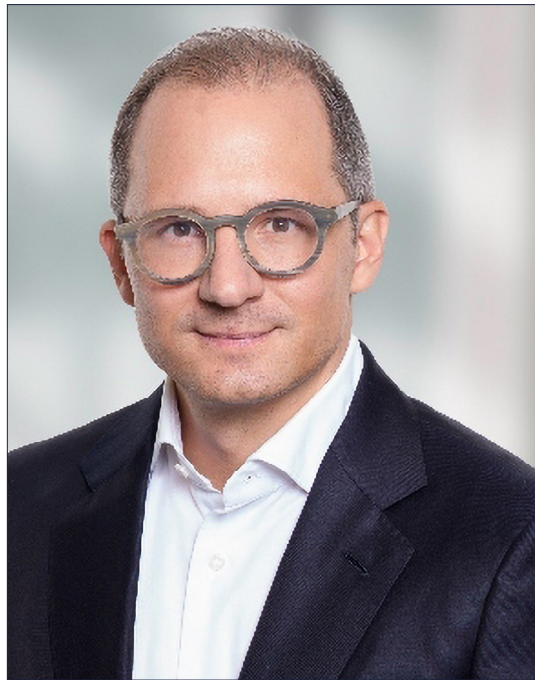
For Swiss disputes, he notes, the Middle East is quite important. “Swiss law often serves as a pragmatic compromise where parties cannot agree on another governing law. It offers a stable and predictable framework, and a neutral environment for negotiations and dispute resolution.”

Gen Z appeal

Rusch adds: “Clients entrust us with their most critical disputes. What matters most to them is that you have the expertise, experience and capacity to deliver. In that sense, the team is often more important than the name of the firm, which is an advantage when making a move and building a new practice.

As a team effort, disputes work ultimately requires critical mass to handle large and complex cases. For that reason, Rusch acknowledges, “We intend to expand the team further, including at partner level. We’re actively speaking to people. Our goal is for dispute resolution to ultimately account for around 30% of our overall work. Given our current size, that would mean a team of 10-20 lawyers, with three or four partners. That said, the main goal is not a specific number, but to grow sustainably aligned with our clients’ needs.”

The Advestra brand appeals to GenZ. “We can attract very good people,” says Rusch. “Advestra is known as a young, dynamic and ambitious firm - a place where people want to work, and it’s already a household name among university students. Many candidates are drawn to the unique opportunity of building something new. A recent hire put it particularly well: “Advestra is not a big firm, nor a boutique, it combines the best of both worlds - the clients and work of a big firm, but also the agility and culture of a



“ Advestra is not a big firm, nor a boutique, it combines the best of both worlds

Lukas Rusch, Advestra

boutique.” We are focused, rather than full-service - a deliberate choice and a clear differentiator.”

Spring combines in house and private practice experience. “Our employment practice fits very naturally into Advestra’s client base,” she says. “A great deal of employment advice arises in the context of corporate advisory work, M&A, private equity, restructurings and governance topics. Since the further development of our employment practice, we cover the full spectrum, including day-to-day employment law advice, compliance topics, executive matters and employment litigations.

“We advise and represent clients in employment disputes before courts and authorities, handling, amongst others, termination disputes, bonus and

incentive claims (in Switzerland, executive compensation is under sustained scrutiny), non-compete enforcement and mass dismissal related litigation. Many mandates naturally evolve from advisory situations into contentious matters, which makes close integration between advisory and litigation expertise particularly valuable.”

Hot topic

On the advisory side, she adds, typical mandates include employment due diligence, business transfers and restructurings, executive and key employee matters such as incentive plans, retention plans, employment contracts, and everything around terminations, termination agreements. “We also handle mass dismissals, including planning, execution and risk management, and global mobility topics, including personnel lending and cross-border assignments.”

Looking ahead, Spring anticipates that: “A main part of our employment work will remain M&A connected - be it due diligence, or other employment matters arising in transactional context. At the same time, employment litigation is expected to play an increasingly important role. Executive compensation continues to be a primary focus as a hot topic in Switzerland.

“Developing employment advisory and dispute resolution in parallel allows Advestra to identify and mitigate contentious risk earlier, advise strategically on escalations versus resolution, and offer continuity if an advisory matter becomes contentious.”

Rusch concludes: “We’re not looking to become full-service. Our focused approach is what sets us apart in the Swiss market. Rather than offering a bit of everything, we prefer to work with the best firms for specific areas, such as IP or competition, to ensure that clients receive the best possible expertise in each area.” ●

Reports Legal

Based in London, Reports Legal delivers an unparalleled focus of the work done by international law firms in multiple jurisdictions on behalf of their commercial clients.

This *Switzerland Report* publication is the latest in a series of reports examining the business of law in diverse legal markets. Each report will combine an economic overview with substantive legal market analysis for senior business lawyers advising across different sectors and practice areas: from banking, capital markets, M&A and FinTech to life sciences, dispute resolution, private equity and TMT.

About us

Reports Legal is managed by Dominic Carman and James Air, both of whom have considerable experience in these markets. In recognising that most legal publishers now operate behind a paywall, they decided that everything published by Reports Legal will be free for lawyers to access online. There is no paywall.

Dominic has been involved in legal publishing for 30 years in London, New York and Hong Kong. A regular media contributor, he was a legal feature writer for *The Times*. Dominic undertakes diverse projects for international law firms, speaks at events, and judges the British Legal Awards and the Legal Week Innovation Awards.

See more about Dominic on [LinkedIn](#).

James has extensive experience in dealing with international law firms. Previously at *Legal Business*, where he spent five years engaged in producing a wide variety of reports on diverse legal markets, he understands the commercial objectives of law firms in a challenging, competitive market.

To receive free future reports from Reports Legal, please email james@reportslegal.com





REPORTS LEGAL