

‘CLIENTS AND PROSPECTS LOVE THAT WE HAVE AN OFFICE IN ZUIDAS’

It’s been almost five months since the international law firm Bird & Bird opened an office in Zuidas, and both employees and clients enthuse about the new location. At their ‘office of the future’, where everything is keyed to transnational teamwork, everyone is eagerly awaiting the arrival of the European Medicines Agency (EMA). Hello Zuidas talked to Wouter Pors, Partner and Head of the firm’s Intellectual Property Practice, and Sophie Dingenen, Corporate & Projects Partner and Member of the Global Steering Committee of the Energy & Utilities Group, to learn why. ‘After 29 March next year, many companies in England will lose their EU market authorization for medicines’, explains Wouter. ‘We can offer the legal and full project management capacity to prepare them for the new playing field.’

CLIENTS AND PROSPECTS CHOOSE AMSTERDAM

Back in 2001, several Bird & Bird partners opened the firm’s first Dutch office in The Hague. This new location in Amsterdam makes two. ‘In The Hague we work a lot in regulated markets such as telecom. It’s convenient to be close to the government’, says Wouter. ‘As time went on, however, we noticed that more and more domestic and international clients assumed we had an office in the capital and so expected to meet us there. It was in response to this that we opened our new office in the ITO Tower.’ ‘Now that this office is actually up and

running’, adds Sophie, ‘it’s clear just how much clients and prospects love the fact that we’re here. This office really reflects who we are. I have weekly appointments here with clients and prospects of the energy practice, most of whom are based in and around Amsterdam.’

OFFICE OF THE FUTURE

Styling itself ‘the office of the future’, Bird & Bird is less focused on day-to-day market trends. ‘Internationally, we are very much involved in future technologies’, explains Wouter, ‘and that includes the legal frameworks that come with



WOUTER PORS AND SOPHIE DINGENEN

it. That takes a lot of legal brainpower. Take autonomous driving, an issue I’m working on and which our firm is setting up with authorities, industry and universities. This requires defining the statutory groundwork needed for this technology and determining what will make it a success.’ ‘The same applies to energy’, says Sophie. ‘We make innovative changes in the market and ask, for instance, how can new products be marketed effectively and in such a way that safeguards the legal status of the products and parties involved? These are the types of questions we’re working on. Now we’ve got clients that use an incredible amount of energy, for example. Apart from providing legal advice, we can also connect them with a windfarm or solar park to transition their product and technology through sustainable power sourcing. That puts us ahead of other firms.’

EMA COUNTDOWN

By 29 March of next year, the BREXIT will be a done deal. According to Wouter, it’s unlikely that

solid transitional agreements will be in place before then. ‘This means that pharmaceutical companies operating in England will no longer have an EU market authorization for medicines. Particularly biotech in England often has no international group structure or legal entity in the EU, even though it’s a vital prerequisite. Those companies need to have an office in, say, the Netherlands, and will have to designate a legal entity. Another crucial point is appointing people who are specialized in drug regulation. The EMA has stated that these people must work and live in the EU. Apart from becoming an EU location and legal entity, the companies also need to change their permits. Amending a permit can take six to nine months, which makes achieving the 29 March deadline a real challenge. For English companies facing these hurdles, whether in England or on the continent, we can take care of all of the legal steps and manage the whole project from A to Z. It’s a challenge we are well-equipped to handle.’

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