



ROMANOS SKANDAMIS

When regulation and negotiation converge

The managing partner of Skandamis Avocats discusses the firm's Swiss-Greek footprint, FINMA-facing mandates, multi-party negotiations, and how litigation discipline shapes business decisions

by claudia la via

Choosing the right questions, writing precisely, pleading effectively—and staying comfortable with the unexpected: it is an approach Skandamis Avocats applies well beyond the courtroom, from complex transactions to boardroom situations. Operating between Geneva and Athens, the firm advises corporates, financial institutions, entrepreneurs and private clients on disputes and complex matters where litigation risk, regulation and negotiation often converge. Managing partner **Romanos Skandamis** describes advocacy not as a separate discipline but as a method applied across the board: “We bring the core competences of litigation into everything we do,” he says.

In this interview with *MAG*, he discusses how the Geneva–Athens platform shapes cross-border mandates, why defining success early can matter as much as the final ruling, and where he is seeing increased activity: from financial intermediary regulation to multi-party disputes and crisis-driven negotiations.

Geneva and Athens: where does the dual presence matter most—and what is the key difference between Swiss and Greek legal and

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business culture in high-stakes matters?

The most important difference is that in Greece, given the multitude of legal texts and frequent changes in the law, one of the most significant parts of the lawyer’s work is to identify what exactly applies to a given case. “To say the law,” in other words. In Switzerland, things are much simpler in this regard and the work of the lawyer usually begins beyond that point. In all Greek-re-



ROMANOS SKANDAMIS WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE TEAM:
 JUNIOR ASSOCIATE EKATERINA KUPALOVA AND SENIOR ASSOCIATE CHRISTOPHER D'AMBROSIO

lated matters we bring conciseness and precision, which is what a Swiss law firm is supposed to do.

What drives client demand today and what has grown most in the past 12 months?

As a firm active in disputes, finance, and private clients, we are by nature multisectoral. Over the past year, we have seen steadily increasing demand for advice on the compliance and regulatory obligations of financial intermediaries from FINMA authorizations and scrutiny to enforcement, sanctions, and money laundering considerations. These issues recur often and tend to intersect with matters that may at first seem unrelated. Disputes continue to be a strong driver of our activity, particularly in financial intermediary and banking litigation, private equity conflicts, real estate disputes, and defence work.

«When more than one jurisdiction is involved, coordination becomes key»

Can you share two recent matters that illustrate your approach?

We recently represented a large foreign minority shareholder in a major commercial real estate project in Switzerland. Significant disagreements arose over various issues and the mandate was, to the client, one of commercial law and private equity. We reframed the points of disagreement as major litigable matters and forced a difficult negotiation. Today, our client owns the entire project.

On another matter, the shareholder of a major financial intermediary in Geneva went bankrupt and we were asked to assist in the ensuing multi-layered crisis. Again, what began as a regulatory mandate evolved into a complex multi-party negotiation which resulted in a full management buyout. Today, the company is thriving again.

What was at stake, and what did you do differently?

These examples are very dear to me for two reasons. First, they show that a “big picture advocacy approach”, much like in a trial, rather than advice limited to the first question asked, may shape results in brilliant ways. The second reason is that in both cases our clients started with practically nothing and, once the dust settled, ended up with everything. And that is what gets us up in the morning.



«We look for people with a strong work ethic and a beautiful mind»

In disputes and investigations, how do you set strategy early to manage risk, evidence and reputation, especially cross-border?

While disputes are unpredictable by nature, when broken into smaller parts, predictable aspects and patterns appear. It is how one combines those that give rise to a strategy. As for “winning”, it has many shapes and forms and sometimes they do not stand out: for example, immediate effective communication may be more important than a result that may come years later. Defining success is crucial.

Speed-wise, disputes and investigations are always “front-loaded”: at the start, time is compressed as urgent measures, including the preservation of evidence, must be assessed immediately and filed where appropriate. Necessary filings, often numerous or in different jurisdictions, need to take place quickly.

When more than one jurisdiction is involved, coordination becomes key.

Many things can be said on the subject, but one is always true: absolutely immaculate understanding of facts and legal stakes must be gained as soon as possible. The rest follows.

Is AI already improving your work and what are your red lines on confidentiality, verification and accountability?

Today AI does not improve our work in a measurable way. Not yet, and probably not for

some time. Beyond the issues of confidentiality and accountability, it is simply too imprecise and too prone to mistakes. We are testing tools and are following developments closely, but we would only adopt them once they meet the level of accuracy that our work requires.

With tighter AML and “de-risking” dynamics, what practical advice helps founders and boards stay bankable beyond compliance?

Beyond issues of compliance, which either exist or they don't, we often see private clients maintaining complex structures without truly needing them. Often they are relics of another time. This creates unnecessary complexity in many ways and renders vanilla transactions difficult to explain, as they must be shaped around the structure rather than the other way round.

So I would say: diversify your banking relationships and simplify your structure if you can. It will also be cheaper.

When you hire, what is non-negotiable beyond technical excellence?

We have a very traditional approach: we look for people with a strong work ethic and a beautiful mind. Everything else matters much less.

The sort of people we look for have existed in the past and still exist within the new generation. They have always created value, and always will for any firm.

Looking ahead 3–5 years, what is your vision and what will you prioritize?

Growth is not a goal in itself. It is a consequence of relentless work and of delivering positive results for clients. I am proud to say that in its ten years of existence, the firm has grown very substantially and I am confident it will continue to do so for these very reasons. 

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