

## BCH Lawyers

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## Duarte G Henriques, Managing Partner

**Managing partner Duarte G Henriques explains how the firm is adapting to clients' changing needs**

**What do you see as the main points that differentiate BCH from your competitors?**

BCH specialises in international dispute resolution, both in arbitration or litigation. Our areas of practice range from international contracts, M&A, corporate, and commercial law, to banking law, tax law and administrative law. We have also been involved in construction disputes and issues related to IP and copyright.

We focus on what really matters to best defend clients' interests in a simple, clear and cost-effective manner. Our background has evolved from a broad practice basis to greater specialisation. In fact, during the 90's our law firm was more dedicated to transactional work, providing assistance in a wide range of matters with different levels of complexity and sums involved. At that time, this work represented around 50% of our practice and the rest was related to dispute resolution. This allowed us to combine both kinds of practices and to move, over the last 15 years, to a practice more focused on dispute resolution. This now represents around 90% of our work and is grounded in a solid background of substantive knowledge and in a clear understanding of the clients' businesses.

The third fundamental characteristic of BCH is our ability to work with lean dedicated teams that, at the same time, may be broadened to receive contributions from other lawyers and law firms. This is especially relevant in disputes involving more than one jurisdiction. We have all the necessary connections and associations with international lawyers and law firms to expand our team when necessary. The same applies in domestic disputes. Similarly, BCH is able to join other law firms' teams in any given case involving either the



Portuguese jurisdiction or any other jurisdiction where our contribution is required.

Finally, a cornerstone of our practice is permanent and direct contact with the client. It is our strong belief that clients really need and search for a close relationship with a lawyer whom they trust, and this close relationship is maintained throughout the case.

In short, BCH provides specialised, flexible, internationally connected and cost-efficient solutions, via close and permanent links with our clients.

**Which practices do you see growing in the next 12 months? What are the drivers behind that?**

We believe that our work in the international scenario is going to keep its pace of exponential growth. Indeed, disputes are increasingly involving several jurisdictions and we have been witnessing an increase in the number of cases where international law firms search for small law firms or even individuals to team up with them. The same is true in relation to the international work that BCH takes abroad.

Furthermore, BCH is experiencing a very interesting and relevant growth in cases related to investment arbitration (not connected with the Portuguese state) and we believe that this field will continue to expand.

As for the subject matters, our expertise in arbitration in banking and finance leads us to believe that this is going to be a major area of disputes. On the other hand, our close connections with an entirely new business in international disputes – the market of litigation and arbitration finance with so-called 'third-party-funders' – will continue to bring excellent opportunities for work.

Finally, we think that, in Portugal, arbitration in tax matters (against the Portuguese state) is going to continue to bubble. In this respect, Rui Barreira is considered to be one of the best lawyers in Portugal in tax matters, which provides us with a solid base to handle all disputes related to this subject matter.

**What's the main change you've made in the firm that will benefit clients?**

Definitely, our move towards a more international perspective and connections mixed with our expertise in new areas of international dispute resolution, such as banking and finance, and litigation-arbitration financing.

**Is technology changing the way you interact with your clients, and the services you can provide them?**

Undoubtedly, technology allows us to be more and better connected with clients. Clients can access their files at any time and anywhere. We can reach clients wherever they are. Just to give one example, video-conferencing is now at the touch of a button, literally. This is the reason why BCH can reach several jurisdictions and adopt an international perspective to our practice.

**Can you give us a practical example of how you have helped a client to add value to their business?**

The outcome of a dispute does not always bring 'added value' to our clients because, even when the case is won, often it is a matter of recovering something that was somehow lost along the way. But if the client was expecting to lose money and you are able to save it, you may well say that you brought 'added value'. In this respect, I have in mind a particular issue related to an insurance policy covering the professional liability of accountants. Our client (the insurance company) was sued by more than 100 claimants and had to create a €5m accountable provision (reserve). From those cases, only three are still pending a final decision. We have managed to have a 97% success rate in all the cases that have been decided and the actual disbursement for compensation was no more than €150,000. We believe that our client gained real benefit from our work.

**Are clients looking for stability and strategic direction from their law firms - where do you see the firm in three year's time?**

We have no doubt that clients need stability and strategic direction. We strongly believe that we can continue to build our practice pursuing the same path we chose over 25 years ago. The international setting is our favourite field of practice but we keep our connections strongly rooted in Portugal where the development of international arbitration is gaining more and more appeal as well as attention from international players.