

VIAC CAN Newsletter for the CEE region

RECAP of the 2nd VIAC CAN Congress: VIAC CAN connecting the dots – CEE/SEE in focus!

The second VIAC CAN Congress kicked off on Thursday, 8 February 2024 with an invitation only pre-Congress workshop exclusively designed for our VIAC Ambassadors. The workshop entitled "The Art of Cross-examination" was skillfully facilitated by VIAC's Vice President, the infamous, **Franz Schwarz**, who shared his invaluable knowledge and experience, putting the participants through their paces and guiding them through the intricacies of cross-examination.

The workshop was followed by a traditional Viennese dinner, which provided the perfect setting to reflect on our achievements from the past year and brainstorm new ideas for the road ahead. In addition to the latter, we enjoyed each other's company and had some great conversations, which is what makes this network so unique!



On Friday, 9 February 2024, the main conference took place at the beautiful Christoph Leitl Lounge at the top floor of the Austrian Federal Chamber of Commerce.

The President of the Austrian Supreme Court **Georg E. Kodek** welcomed the participants of the conference with an insightful and entertaining opening speech. **Caroline Adenberger**, Head of Markets of Advantage Austria, shared some insights about Advantage Austria and the established collaboration between the Trade commissioners in the CEE region and VIAC Ambassadors. Our Keynote speaker at the VIAC CAN Congress was **John James McVeigh**, the CEO and Head Trainer of Nixedonia, - a legal business development expert with 20 years of experience in growing revenues at over 400 law firms across 50+ countries. The interactive session engaged the audience in an active discussion and gave lawyers some food for thought as to how to grow and expand their business. These included concepts such as Cross-Selling through Tea for Two and Tea for Three, the 1-2-4 Rule, which shows how to generate the most billable hours with the least effort, the Iceberg Model, which reflects that the needs of legal clients are not black nor white, but rather at different levels of conscious awareness, the Client Relationship Cliff and much more. Our VIAC CAN Director **Ema Potočník** skillfully presented a VIAC Pitch, receiving a lot of praise from the audience and some practical recommendations from the Trainer from a business development perspective.

During *Panel I: ADR in Emerging Markets*, **Filip Boras**, **Marie Talasova**, **Marija Sekeroska** and **Miklós Boronkay** discussed modern trends in domestic and international arbitration. Representing Serbia, the Czech Republic, North Macedonia and Hungary, our speakers were able to compare diverse domestic arbitration trends, such as the economic sectors where arbitration is more widely used, frequency of using arbitration clauses in contracts concluded by state-owned entities or in the B2B context. The discussion revolved around challenges and perception of ADR in emerging markets, as well as ways of accelerating the evolution of international arbitration in CEE/SEE through increasing the pool of qualified counsel/arbitrators for international arbitration, better and regular communication on the part of the institution with domestic lawyers, and better representation of lawyers from these jurisdictions within the arbitral institution itself and at the level of arbitrator appointments. This really interesting substance was expertly moderated by the wonderful **Iuliana Iancu**. Many thanks also to VIAC Ambassador for Bosnia and Herzegovina **Ilma Kasumagic**, who supported us with the organization of Panel I.

The speakers of *Panel II: New Trends in Investment Arbitration – what role can the Vienna Rules play in the region?* **Otakar Hájek**, **Samira Sulejmanovic**, **Fahira Brodlija**, **Lucia Raimanova** and **Markus Burgstaller** discussed how Achmea and Komstroy judgments affected modern investment arbitration, explored the new ISDS policies of the EU and compared the situation in the EU member and non-member states in CEE/SEE. The implications of terminating bilateral investment treaties within the EU were examined. The discussion also touched upon the internal reform processes within states and the potential establishment of a multilateral investment court. The diverse backgrounds of our stellar speakers enriched the dialogue and allowed us to investigate these questions from the perspective of government officials, development agency representatives and legal practitioners. The panel also outlined the key features and costs of an arbitration under the VIAC Rules of Investment Arbitration and Mediation. We very much appreciate the support and insights of VIAC International Board Member **Veronika Korom** in preparing for Panel II.



VIAC introduced a well-being component to the conference this year, and the last session of the Congress was devoted to the *Workshop on Body Language and Non-verbal Communication*, which was conducted by **W. Samuel Bartussek**, a professional mime artist and an international trainer in somatic techniques. This was a great way for the attendees to relax and have a bit of laugh at the end of a long day.



The social programme during the VIAC CAN Congress was designed with special care and attention. Kicking off the Friday morning with high energy, our **spinning class** provided a dynamic start to the day, energising our attendees and setting a lively tone for the Congress. Another highlight was a **remarkable dinner at the Austrian National Library**, in one of the most exclusive rooms in Vienna. Amidst the shelves of literary treasures, our participants enjoyed a delicious meal in great company.



On Saturday, attendees had the opportunity to polish their waltzing skills in an elegant **ballroom dancing class**, providing a perfect opportunity to learn new steps and to mingle over a glass of champagne.

The grand finale of our social programme was the unforgettable **Juristenball / Ball of Legal Professionals** held in the breathtaking Hofburg Palace. It was a night of joyous celebration amidst stunning architecture and timeless elegance.



Every participant would agree that the **VIAC CAN Congress 2024** was not just an ordinary event – it was a conference celebrating regional collaboration, promoting both hard and soft skills, providing substantial input and many opportunities for enjoyment. In just one year, VIAC CAN has witnessed remarkable growth and expansion. What started as a regional initiative has blossomed into an established platform, drawing professionals from across the region and beyond to exchange ideas, insights, and experiences.

Every moment at the Congress set the stage for new steps and opportunities for the VIAC CAN initiative. Let's continue to build bridges, foster collaboration, and drive positive change in the CEE/SEE region and beyond!



The team behind the VIAC CAN project, **Niamh Leinwather**, VIAC Secretary General, **Emilia Potočník**, VIAC CAN Director, and **Vladyslava Donchyk**, VIAC CAN Coordinator are extremely grateful for the support of the Organising Committee, including VIAC President **Nikolaus Pitkowitz**, VIAC Vice President **Patrizia Netal**, VIAC Deputy Secretary General **Anna Förstel-Cherng**, VIAC International Board Member **Veronika Korom**, VIAC Ambassador for Bosnia and Herzegovina **Ilma Kasumagic** and Associate at Pitkowitz & Partners **Johanna Kathan-Spath**.

We also very much appreciate the support from our fantastic sponsors and are genuinely proud to have so many from Central and Eastern Europe! This is a testament to the depth of the VIAC CAN initiative.

THANK YOU!

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