

Community round-up: E.CA Economics hires former DG Comp economist

Ciaran Willis



In the latest round of promotions and hires, two economic consultancies have recruited from enforcement agencies and Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer has promoted two lawyers to the partnership in Europe and the US.

E.CA Economics

Gregor Langus, a former member of the chief economist team at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Competition, has joined E.CA Economics as director.

Langus, 45, took up his new position in Brussels on Monday. He moved from Compass Lexecon, where he had worked since September 2018.

Langus previously worked for DG Comp's chief economist team for six years during two separate stints, between 2007 and 2011, and from 2016 to 2018. He worked under three chief economists, Damien Neven, Massimo Motta and Tommaso Valletti.

Langus told GCR that because of the coronavirus pandemic, it is not an ideal time to start a senior role: “I cannot meet people, see how they react, how they feel. You know, you don’t see the body language”. He added that he likes to be around people and the excitement of the office.

He said he enjoyed his work at Compass Lexecon and that “it’s a really good company” but he was attracted to taking up a senior role, which is an opportunity and a challenge.

E.CA has a very good reputation and a team of excellent economists, Langus said, and he aims to help the consultancy grow and to take on the challenge of growing its young team.

He said E.CA has a great team of real experts with a hard work ethic. “So, I’m excited”.

A spokesperson from Compass Lexecon said the team wish Langus well in his new role.

Langus – who previously spent two separate stints at both Compass Lexecon and DG Comp – said he has made a “conscious” decision to move between the public and private sectors.

He said the DG Comp is an exciting place to work: “You are surrounded by many excellent and curious economists speaking the same language. You feel that your opinion matters – most of the time at least – and the questions you get are always relevant. In such an environment, it’s impossible to stop learning or be bored. What’s not to like?”

While at Compass Lexecon, Langus testified for Disney in the European Commission’s investigation into clauses that prevented EU pay-TV being customers from accessing content shown in certain geographical locations. The case ended with the commission accepting commitments from Disney, NBCUniversal, Sony Pictures and Warner Brothers to remove the restrictions.

He said that working on the case with the Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton partner, Maurits Dolmans – who he described as a “legend” in the field – was an “intensive and rewarding” experience, where he learned a lot. He also felt a “special” responsibility working for Mickey Mouse, he added.

While at DG Comp, he analysed the proposed merger between US chemical companies Dow and DuPont. He said the case, which the authority cleared with commitments, had a big impact on him as his analysis on the effects of innovation incentives “set in motion a big debate”, he added.

Langus said that the industry is changing, with more young people entering and with more people working in competition policy than five years ago. “With that, you have some room for experimentation” and “new methods”, he said. Young people are eager to learn, and he’d like to help them do that, he added.

Hans W Friederiszick, one of the founding directors of E.CA Economics, said “Gregor is an outstanding economist”, who has steered complex analyses and strategic advice for the competition authority and companies.

E.CA now has 35 competition economists.

Compass Lexecon

Joe Perkins, former chief economist at the UK’s Office of Gas and Electricity Markets, has joined Compass Lexecon as senior vice president and will also take up the newly created head of research role.

Perkins, 41, moved to Compass Lexecon, having worked at Ofgem since 2016. He will take up his head of research role in June.

The research team will be made up of experts in economic theory, financial economics, economic policy and data science – with the aim of producing “thought leadership” and analysing complex data.

Perkins said that after a decade of enjoying a wide range of public sector roles, he wanted a new challenge to apply the skills he’s developed in different work environments and countries. He was also attracted by Compass Lexecon’s “commitment to have a positive impact on society”, which he noted is one of the five key values it aims to live by.

Before joining Ofgem, Perkins worked at the National Audit Office: he joined as a senior analyst in 2011, before becoming the audit manager. From 2014 he was the NAO’s director for regulation, consumers and competition.

He began his career as an economist at the UK Treasury and also worked at the Independent Public Service Pensions Commission.

Perkins said that joining the company during the coronavirus lockdown “clearly presents some challenges”, as one of his objectives is to develop Compass Lexecon’s advanced analytical capability across its EMEA offices.

But he added, “I think we’re all now getting pretty comfortable with interacting remotely – and I’ve become reasonably adept at persuading my children not to join my Skype calls!”

Jorge Padilla, senior managing director of Compass Lexecon EMEA, said Perkins joins at an “incredibly exciting time” of expansion, with the practice having tripled in size over the last five years. He added his “unique and pivotal” research role will help ensure Compass Lexecon remains at the forefront of economic thinking.

Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer

Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer has promoted Paul van den Berg and Justin Stewart-Teitelbaum to the partnership, beginning on 1 May.

Paul van den Berg, 36, who splits his time between Amsterdam and Brussels, said he’s “absolutely delighted” with the promotion. He has been at the firm since leaving university, and said “it’s always been the place I called home”.

He started out in 2007 as an associate in the mergers and acquisitions team, before switching to antitrust. In 2014, he spent a year in Beijing, which he said was “really defining”, both as an experience and in [developing] his knowledge on China’s competition regime

For the last three years, he has been located between Amsterdam and Brussels. The time has “flown by” since he started at the firm, he said.

Van den Berg advises multinational companies on antitrust, merger control and behavioural cases, and is also counsel for global financial investors; he describes it as a “nice balance.” Foreign investment control is also now an “integral” part of his practice he said, and especially now due to the coronavirus pandemic, as many jurisdictions have increased their foreign investment control review regimes over the past few years.

Van den Berg acted as counsel on the European Commission’s abuse of dominance investigation into AB InBev, where the commission made a novel cooperation decision. It was “highly interesting”, Van den Berg said, because it set a new compliance standard for parallel trade cases that is highly relevant for many fast-moving consumer goods companies.

He also has “fond memories” of working on the UPS/TNT merger, which the commission initially prohibited. But after Freshfields appealed the case, the European Court of Justice annulled the decision.

Justin Stewart-Teitelbaum, 38, based in Washington, DC, said he’s “thrilled and honoured” to make partner. “It’s really been a privilege to be a part of the team”.

Stewart-Teitelbaum began his career as a legal intern before joining the US Federal Trade Commission as an attorney, where he spent six years. He then joined Freshfields in 2014.

Compared to working at the FTC, which is focused primarily on US antitrust enforcement, Stewart-Teitelbaum said, much of his work at Freshfields has a “fun cross-border and cross-practice flavour”, which has “always been exciting, fast-moving and enjoyable”, he added.

He said it is “particularly rewarding” to be promoted alongside van den Berg, who has been one of his colleagues and friends since he joined the firm.

In 2015, Stewart-Teitelbaum worked in the firm’s London office. “If I look back, it’s probably the highlight of my career: a change of scene... utilising what I’d learned about antitrust at the FTC in a different landscape and learning more about the issues our International clients might face beyond the US.” Working on in-depth European Commission merger reviews is something he’s enjoyed ever since, he added.

He was counsel to Evonik in the hydrogen peroxide producer’s merger with PeroxyChem. He was part of the trial team in the FTC’s failed bid to block the deal.

The team was “fortunate enough” to get the decision in their favour, “defeating the FTC in an area that it “rarely loses” he said. He also worked on the Novartis/GlaxoSmithKline/Eli Lilly transactions in 2014 soon after he joined the firm.

He said that, under social distancing measures, apart from geographical location, not much has changed. Freshfields has shown its strength and flexibility, which is helped by the fact that “we are familiar and trust each other as teammates” he said.

Thomas Janssens, global head of antitrust at Freshfields, said that van den Berg and Stewart-Teitelbaum are “both outstanding antitrust lawyers”. “I’ve worked with both of them and always very much enjoyed that. They are great colleagues and that’s obviously a very important aspect,” he said.

The clients have been cheering them on to become partners, which is probably the best proof that we are making the right decision, Janssens said.

He added that the promotions reinforce our team, “not just because they’re both very talented individuals”, but also in terms of the key areas and jurisdictions in which they practise. “From that perspective it’s absolutely the right move”.

Freshfields now has 53 partners in its global competition practice.