



ISRAEL

The new enforcement avenues being explored by Israel's Antitrust Authority – measures regulating excessive pricing, concentration groups and information sharing – generate novel cases for lawyers to get their teeth into, while constantly evolving legislation makes their compliance advice all the more sought after

ELITE

AGMON & CO ROSENBERG HACOHEN & CO is one of the undisputed leaders of the Israeli antitrust bar. Practice head Mattan Meridor says his five-partner team have their pick of the cases, “we are called into every white-collar case we hear of”, and they are often asked to handle appeals where they were not involved in the initial case. Meridor has led the practice for the last few years, while firm co-founder and *Who's Who Legal: Competition* nominee Zvi Agmon remains an important presence at the firm and still takes on a large number of cases, particularly class action disputes.

The team was involved in some particularly significant mergers last year, including acting for *Jerusalem Post* in its successful takeover of its rival newspaper *Maariv*; acting for Fattal Hotels in its acquisition of a hotel in Tiberius, northern Israel; and representing Cellcom in its joint 4G network venture with two rival telecoms companies. Meanwhile, the team is appearing before Parliament on behalf of an individual who owns controlling interests in both First International Bank and Paz Oil Company, and who will be required to divest his interests in both companies as part of Israel's new concentration law.

In an important case on the behavioural side, Meridor and fellow partner Lior Sahar are acting for Hitachi in the gas insulated switchgear case, in which Israel's Antitrust Authority (IAA) exempted Hitachi from any involvement in the cartel's connection to the Israeli market. The team is also representing leading fuel company Delek in three cases, including successfully defending it

in a civil suit brought by an operator of a gas station, which is now under appeal.

When asked which competition groups are doing the most and the best work, the name **FISCHER BEHAR CHEN WELL ORION & CO** is never far from practitioners' lips. The firm boasts the largest antitrust practice in the country with four partners and 12 associates. Tal Eyal-Boger and Reuven Behar are both entrants in *Who's Who Legal: Competition*; Eyal-Boger heads the practice, while Behar, one of the firm's founding partners, has become one of Israel's pre-eminent arbitrators and rarely appears in competition matters. Completing the partnership are Talya Solomon and litigation specialist Tamar Turjeman-Kedem, both of whom are previous members of the IAA.

The firm counts an impressive number of major national and foreign companies as clients. Last year saw the addition of Google to its books, and the firm is now taking on a range of confidential matters for the technology giant. Dairy giant Thuva brings in a large volume of work; Eyal-Boger last year negotiated a 3 million shekel settlement for the company in an information exchange case; and the firm is now involved in a fresh administrative hearing as well as five civil cases brought by plaintiffs seeking damages from inflated cheese prices.

Israel Discount Bank takes up the team's time in a range of antitrust matters. The bank is appealing against the decision of the

general director that it illegally exchanged information, and it is involved in a class action relating to the alleged coordination of interest rates. Solomon is representing two executives of Ashdod Port in the IAA's first attempt to impose an administrative fine. The firm is also involved in each of the three ongoing, controversial damages cases that follow on from European rather than Israeli decisions. It is acting for ABB, the leniency applicant in the gas insulated switchgear cartel that is being sued by Israel Electric; for Lufthansa and Swiss International Air Lines in air cargo; and for Samsung in LCD panels.

All four antitrust partners at **TADMOR & CO** are former executives at the IAA; something which doubtless contributes to the marked confidence in the practice of both international firms and the IAA itself. Firm founder David Tadmor, the director general of Israel's Antitrust Authority between 1997 and 2001, is regarded as one of the country's true experts in competition law. He and his co-head Shai Bakal are both *Who's Who Legal: Competition* entrants. They are joined in the partnership by litigation experts David Gideoni and Nava Karavany, and frequently supported by Ittai Paldor, a former IAA prosecutor who heads the litigation department.

While enjoying a good relationship with the authority, Tadmor says his team is "not afraid of pushing legal boundaries". Acting for real estate company Azrieli Group, the firm recently convinced the Supreme Court to undo the IAA's attempt to block the group from appealing against a merger prohibition decision; it was the first time the court granted an appeal that was not brought by the commissioner himself. The firm is acting for Siemens in the gas insulated switchgear cartel investigation and worked for the First International Bank of Israel in the IAA's investigation of an information exchange between banks, which closed earlier this year with fines of only a fifth of what the authority originally demanded.

The team prides itself on being the first port of call for Israeli advice on multinational mergers. It acted for Siemens in its smart grid joint venture with Accenture; for Blackstone Group in its

acquisition of Kodak; and for Lenovo in the purchase of IBM's server business. Bakal was also involved in an unusually high-profile domestic merger this year, acting for major news agency Israel Today in its takeover of a much smaller, right-wing rival. The merger raised heated objections from a media plurality perspective but was ultimately cleared without conditions.

Its competition team makes **WEINSTOCK-ZECLER & CO** a go-to firm for complex litigation work in Israel. *Who's Who Legal: Competition* nominee Niv Zecler is the former General Counsel of the IAA ("he's who to pick if you want a good fight," says a rival practitioner). He works alongside seven associates and two fellow partners: Eran Zach, who specialises in criminal work; and Ofer Argov, who focuses on civil antitrust and corporate litigation.

The firm's competition team has been busy with criminal, administrative and civil proceedings. On the civil side, it defended food company Strauss Group against Cadbury's allegations that it abused its dominant position and excluded the chocolate maker from the market, while also acting for Strauss in a class action seeking damages for alleged price fixing in the dairy market. The team also worked for Abbott and its distributor Promedico in one of the IAA's first administrative cases to use the new oligopoly chapter in the Antitrust Law, which saw it accused of being part of a three-pronged monopoly in the baby formula market. The case ended with a consent decree and commitments, rather than fines. The team assisted Steimatky, a retail chain in the book market, and its chief executive in criminal allegations that were concluded in an administrative consent decree. The team is also acting for Alrov real estate group in an appeal to the tribunal against a blocked merger.

On the criminal side, Zach is coordinating the defence for two chief executives facing collusion allegations in the building and water meter industries respectively, while Argov is representing Mer Technologies in a bid-rigging case.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

International experience goes hand in hand with international clients at **EPSTEIN KNOLLER CHOMSKY OSNAT GILAT TENENBOIM & CO**. The practice is jointly led by Tamar Dolev Green and Mazor Matzkevich, who previously spent four years at the IAA and six at the US Federal Trade Commission. *Who's Who Legal: Competition* entrant Eytan Epstein, who worked at the European Commission before joining the Israeli bar, completes the partnership.

The firm represented long-standing client MasterCard in the Interchange Fee case that concluded earlier this year, and is currently acting for the company in the IAA's market study and potential reform of the debit cards sector. The firm acted for Toshiba in the gas insulated switchgear investigation, successfully convincing the IAA that the company's alleged involvement in the international cartel had no effect in Israel, helping the company escape sanctions and the follow-on damage claims that are now dogging its rivals. Dolov-Green is representing ThyssenKrupp in the authority's attempt to label six elevator makers as monopolists. The firm also acted for Kiryat Shmona Area Bakery and its chief executive in criminal proceedings relating to the bread cartel and

represented Michael Atzmon, who recently became the first lawyer indicted by the IAA for assisting with a restrictive agreement.

MEITAR LIQUORNIK GEVA LESHEM TAL has gone from strength to strength in recent years, as the antitrust practice grows in number and takes on increasingly important cases. The team is led by the highly regarded Michal Halperin, a *Who's Who Legal: Competition* entrant and former general counsel at the IAA.

The practice takes on a mix of merger and behavioural work. The team has acted for dairy company Tnuva in its controversial US\$2.4 billion purchase by China's Bright Food; represented 3G and Berkshire Hathaway in their purchase of Heinz; and acted for Objet in its US\$3 billion merger with Stratasys. On the behavioural side, the firm is acting for Tnuva in connection with a first-of-its-kind administrative fine proceeding brought by the IAA and in an investigation regarding the violation of a consent decree. The firm acted for Bank Leumi in an information exchange case that ended in a favourable settlement with the IAA and it continues to represent the bank in the class actions that have followed.

FIRM	HEAD(S) OF COMPETITION	SIZE	CLIENTS
ELITE			
Agmon & Co Rosenberg Hacohen & Co	Mattan Meridor	5 partners 7 associates	Harel Insurance, Jerusalem Post, Hitachi, PazGas, Fattal Hotels, Delek Group, Cellcom, Delek, Melisron
Fischer Behar Chen Well Orion & Co	Tal Eyal-Boger	4 partners 12 associates	Google, Tnuva, ABB, Swiss International Air Lines, Boeing, Visa Cal, The First International Bank of Israel
Tadmor & Co	David Tadmor Shai Bakal	4 partners 8 associates	Apple, AC Nielsen, Azrieli Group, Colgate, EL AL, Israel Chemicals, Israel Defence Industry, Nestlé, Pfizer
Weinstock-Zecler & Co	Niv Zecler	3 partners 7 associates	Pelephone, Strauss Group, Dor-Alon Group, Super-Pharm, Israeli Dentist Association, Universal McCann
HIGHLY RECOMMENDED			
Epstein Knoller Chomsky Osnat Gilat Tenenboim & Co	Mazor Matzkevich Tamar Dolev Green	3 partners 1 of counsel 4 associates	Aspen Pharmacare, Chevron, Co-op, DHL Israel, Johnson & Johnson, MasterCard, Merck, Swissport Cargo Services, Toshiba, ThyssenKrupp
Meitar Liquornik Geva Leshem Tal	Michal Halperin	3 partners 10 associates	El Al, Egged, Eli Lilly, Broadcom, Tnuva G4S, Altice Group, Applied Materials, Pfizer, Jerusalem, SunPower, Makhteshim Agan, Rolls-Royce, Fiat, GlaxoSmithKline
S Horowitz & Co	Hagai Doron	3 partners 3 associates	British Airways, Daimler, De Beers, General Motors, GE, Koch Industries, Microsoft, Peugeot Citroën, Porsch, Procter & Gamble, Teva, IATA
RECOMMENDED			
Eshel, Ashlagi, Rozent – Law Offices	Gal Rozent	1 partner 2 associates	Intel, 3M, Schindler Elevators, HP Israel, Israel Electric Corporation, Partner Communication, the Israeli Tourist and Travel Agents Association, Maccabi Healthcare Services
Herzog Fox & Neeman	Boaz Golan	1 partner 2 associates	Heinz, Harley Davidson, United Technologies Corporation, Merck & Co Inc, NDS Group, Israel Electric Company, HOT Telecommunications
Lapidot Melchior Abramovich & Co	D Ziv Abramovich	N/A	N/A
Yigal Arnon & Co	Ronit Amir Yaniv	1 partner 5 associates	Ashdod Harbor, El Al, Intel, Israel Discount Bank, Israel Hotel Association, KONE Elevators, Nike Europe, Pal Group, Siemens, Unilever

In other follow-on cases, the firm is defending LG in the LCD panels investigation and Siemens in the gas insulated switchgear investigation. Halperin is acting for national carrier El Al in several matters, including an appeal against the declaration of a monopoly in the airline security market and in hearing proceedings in relation to its request to operate domestic flights.

Who's Who Legal: Competition nominee Hagai Doron leads the compact but talented practice at **S HOROWITZ & CO**. The firm boasts one of the oldest antitrust groups in Israel, established in 1959.

Doron is joined in the partnership by Pnina Sheffer and Asaf Rentsler and supported by three associates.

The team rightfully prides itself on its success in coordinating large global mergers, acting for medical supply maker Medtronic in its US\$43 billion tie-up with Covidien; GE in its high-profile combination with Alstom; Koch Industries in its US\$1.2 billion acquisition of Guardian Industries; Cisco in its purchase of NDS; and both parties in a joint venture between Teva and Procter and Gamble. The firm boasts a host of other international clients, including a good portion of the car industry: it acts for Porsche,

Volkswagen, Jaguar and Land Rover among others, and recently helped Aston Martin set up a new distribution chain. Doron and his team are involved in some major ongoing cartel cases, including three that stem from EU decisions. They act for Fuji in the gas

insulated switchgear investigation, for British Airways in the air cargo investigation and for Sharp in the LCD panels investigation. Doron also represented Teva in the baby formula case, which recently ended in a consent agreement with the authority.

RECOMMENDED

Who's Who Legal: Competition nominee Gal Rozent leads the practice at **ESHEL, ASHLAGI, ROZENT – LAW OFFICES**, which he helped to found in August 2013. Rozent, who previously led the competition practice at Herzog, Fox and Neeman, acts for the Israel Electric Corporation in its pursuit of damages arising from the gas insulated switchgear cartel, which is the highest individual antitrust damages action ever submitted in Israel. He acted for Schindler in a recent monopoly case, and on the transactional side, the firm acted for Partner Communication in a merger of infrastructure with its competitor Hot, which was approved with conditions. On the criminal side, the firm represented the Israeli Tourist and Travel Agents Association and its chief executive in a criminal hearing before the authority (which closed the case), and nowadays represents a former chief executive of a water metre company who was indicted for bid rigging. In a groundbreaking case, Rozent is acting for the complainants against the Ashdod Port, the Israeli monopoly in the unloading of imported vehicles, which is the first case in which the authority is seeking an administrative fine.

The relatively young competition practice at **HERZOG FOX & NEEMAN** is beginning to make its mark on the competition landscape, its rivals say. Boaz Golan heads the practice, bringing with him seven years of experience at the IAA, including five as the authority's general counsel. He is supported by two associates. Golan says around half of the firm's work stems from its larger corporate practice and around half is grown by the antitrust practice itself. HP is an important client, and the firm takes on a range of advisory and compliance work for the technology giant. The firm is advising Matrix IT, the largest IT company in Israel, with respect to a criminal investigation that is being conducted by the IAA. On the merger side, the firm secured an important victory in acting for Hot mobile in its merger with fellow mobile operator Partner – the deal was cleared by the IAA, while a merger between the companies' two rivals were blocked.

As former director of enforcement and compliance at Israel's Antitrust Authority, *Who's Who Legal: Competition* nominee D Ziv Abramovich runs a small but effective practice at **LAPIDOT MELCHIOR ABRAMOVICH & CO**. The Jerusalem-based firm has recently opened a second office in Tel Aviv – Abramovich and two associates will be based there while one will remain in Jerusalem. In merger matters, the firm acted for cereals company Sigma Grains in its successful acquisition by Sugat, the national sugar monopoly. It also represented an undisclosed third party in its successful petition to the IAA to block the merger between Elrov and Karta Parking Lot. On the behavioural side, Abramovich is representing the Israeli Bar in achieving an exemption for setting maximum prices for certain legal services and is acting for a meteorology company and its CEO in a criminal bid-rigging case. The firm is also coordinating a private enforcement case which sees a leading gynaecology professor accusing a private hospital chain of abusing its dominance by refusing to allow access to its facilities.

YIGAL ARNON & CO is headed by Ronit Amir Yaniv, a 23-year veteran of the antitrust field. She is supported by five associates and a separate litigation team, which take on a large number of class actions at any one time. In recent significant matters, the firm defended national airliner El Al against claims of abusive pricing all the way to the Supreme Court. Yaniv is acting for Ashdod Port in a case that marks the first time director David Gilo is seeking an administrative (rather than criminal) fine for restrictive practices. The team is acting for Unilever in several matters, including its acquisition of the remaining shares of Strauss ice cream and a joint venture with Syneron Medical to Illuminage Beauty. It also coordinated JPMorgan, CitiGroup and HSBC's joint investment in a natural gas field off the coast of Israel, a venture that required the approval of four regulators.