

An outstanding lawyer takes shipping seriously

July 7, 2021



Menelaos Kyprianou is the managing partner of the law firm of Michael Kyprianou & Co. LLC. Menelaos obtained an LLB (Hons) degree from Nottingham University, UK in 1993 and subsequently followed the Bar Vocational Course and became a Barrister at-Law of The Middle Temple in 1994.

He specialises in the field of litigation with a cross border element. UK and Russian leading law firms regularly refer work to him. As far back as 2005, The European Legal 500 Directory described him as “a reputable litigator who has handled complex international cases.”

In its 2020 Edition the European Legal 500 Directory described him as “an outstanding lawyer,” while according to the Chambers Europe 2020 directory Menelaos is “relied on by clients for his excellent support in corporate disputes”.

Some of the most important cases he has been involved in are the following:

- Represented a Forbes listed Russian businessman in relation to the resolution of a dispute arising from a joint venture valued at USD 15 billion.
- Has been called as an expert witness on Cyprus Financial Law in arbitration proceedings before the Moscow Chamber of Commerce.
- Has been called as an expert witness on Cyprus contract law before the Svea Court of Appeal in Stockholm.
- Was the lead advocate and had the case management in three related LCIA arbitrations concerning a dispute arising out of a Share Sale Agreement concerning the Kazakhstan port authorities for a consideration in the region of USD 300 million. In these arbitrations Menelaos joined forces with a barrister from one of the UK's leading set of chambers.
- Advised the international firm of Alvarez and Marsal in relation to the latter's appointment as independent experts by the Central Bank of Cyprus to carry out an investigation on the events which led the two largest banks in Cyprus to require state assistance.
- On behalf of a major German bank obtained an anti-suit injunction prohibiting a Cypriot entity of Russian interests from proceeding with a claim against it in the Russian court.

Given the large number of law firms operating in Cyprus, how has Michael Kyprianou & Co LLC managed to distinguish itself from other major competitors?

Indeed there is a large number of competent and professional law firms operating in Cyprus. From our side we try to attract talented lawyers and then give them the support and the incentives to help them grow. We are proud of the large number of lawyers that stay with us for many years. Indeed we have lawyers that are with us for all their career. We also stress and I believe that it has now become embedded in our culture that we must do our utmost in every single project that we undertake and that we must always act with honesty towards our clients.

What are the areas of practice in which the firm has gained itself an international reputation for excellence? Has Shipping been one of them?

The main areas in which our firm has managed to distinguish itself are, I would say, corporate law and cross border litigation disputes. Our shipping department is relatively new. It is now headed by Peter Schodder who has vast experience in the shipping industry having worked in Cyprus and abroad in a number of operational and executive roles for well-known shipping companies. With his group of specialised lawyers we hope to be able to distinguish ourselves in this field too, applying our overriding principles of hard work, attention to detail and finding practical solutions for our clients. And as we stress at our internal meetings, by trying to be useful to society. Otherwise there is really no point in what we do.



What would you say are the main reasons behind Limassol’s success in attracting foreign companies and individuals to invest and establish themselves there?

I would say that this is due to the sound legal system that Cyprus has which is based on the English common law and the clear tax regime with its incentives. I would add to this a very competent sector of professionals in the legal, accountancy and banking sectors. From what our clients tell us they also find Limassol a very enjoyable place to live and to raise a family in.

Has the Golden Passports issue affected your business and if yes to what extend?

A combination of factors led the Golden Passports scheme to be suspended. On the one hand unscrupulous professionals in Cyprus violated the law. On the other the matter was exploited for political reasons in Cyprus and therefore instead of the issue been dealt with discreetly it has been on the headlines for months now. As a multi-faceted firm that we are I do not believe that this issue will have any noticeable impact on us.

In terms of your clientele in Limassol, has there been a big change since this time two years ago?

I would not say that there has been a big change but rather a slow and steady improvement. Both in terms of the magnitude of the projects that we undertake and of the number of these projects.

We have noticed that you are recruiting a lawyer for Germany. What is the reason behind, is it shipping related and when and where do you intend to start your branch?

We are now at an advanced stage of setting up an office in Frankfurt and this is part of our overall strategy of continuing to grow outside of Cyprus. The next city we are considering is Hamburg which we believe will enhance our status as a shipping firm.



What is your greatest strength as a person?

I believe that one attribute that has helped me is to be able to choose the right persons to work with. I am really grateful for all the persons I work with at our law firm and really nothing would have been possible without them.

What is the biggest lesson you have learned in life and what are the greatest milestones of your life?

That you have to treat all around you with respect and always try to create situations where all around you benefit. Never try to have gains only for yourself.

Are you impulsive or organised?

I would say I am the organised type. But I do leave a small space for the spontaneous. And for important decisions I will always rely on my gut feeling, no matter how good something seems on paper.

What do you like most about Cyprus?

I read somewhere that if you are not happy where you live then you will not be happy anywhere. I have lived and studied abroad so I now focus on the benefits of living in Cyprus. Which for me mainly are being close to my family, friends, partners and colleagues.

Interview by Stella Violari
