

Little Adds 20-Lawyer Belgian Firm Reliance

Little Mendelson announced that **Reliance**, a Belgian labor and employment law boutique with 20 lawyers, is joining its global platform. The expansion brings Little's presence in Europe to six countries, while adding an outpost in Brussels, home of the European Union headquarters.

The firm said the move is part of Little's global expansion strategy that includes combining with the top firms focused on labor and employment law in significant international markets, which has led to a footprint of more than 1,500 attorneys across 82 offices and 19 countries. In addition to its office in Brussels, Reliance has an office in Mechelen.

"Given Belgium's significant role in the European and global economies, it was important for Little to find a well-regarded firm like Reliance, which represents top international clients and is recognized for its strength in all aspects of labor and employment law," said Tom Bender and Jeremy Roth, co-managing directors of Little, in a joint statement. "Reliance's team can work seamlessly in Dutch, French and English – a unique attribute among Belgian firms. That ability, combined with the high caliber of Reliance's attorneys, makes the firm a strong addition to our global platform and a logical next step in our expansion strategy."

In a release, the firm said Reliance was founded in 2009 by partners Edward Carlier and Koen De Bisschop, who were later joined by Anne-Valérie Michaux and Erwin Crabeels. The firm works on labor and employment matters, including the defense of claims, collective bargaining and advice on works council matters, representation before government agencies, audits and training. The team also advises employers on such issues as compliance with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation

and other privacy and data security laws, global mobility, restructurings, hiring and termination, workplace discrimination and harassment, and non-compete agreements.

The release continues:

“It’s clear that Littler has an impressive expansion strategy, and we’re excited to join its growing global platform, particularly in Europe,” Carlier said. “Littler’s singular focus on labor and employment law and its reputation as an innovative and global firm is the perfect fit for Reliance. The firm’s presence in key global markets throughout Europe and its vast resources will complement our practice and provide our clients with additional legal offerings in one of the most important business and governmental centers.”

Carlier focuses his practice in all aspects of human resources law, including corporate restructurings. He counsels employers on the design and implementation of effective redundancy plans, and he regularly handles human resources-related conflicts and litigation. De Bisschop advises companies on international mobility, the design of competitive wage structures and data protection, while also counseling executives and directors in relation to their employment or management contracts.

“An office in Belgium – in combination with our existing practices in France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom – is an important addition,” said Stephan Swinkels, a Littler shareholder who helps lead the development and integration of the firm’s global practice. “In addition to its strong reputation around Europe, Reliance’s even split of Dutch and French-speaking attorneys is a significant advantage and aligns well with our robust teams in the Netherlands and France.”

Peter Susser, Littler’s Global Practice Leader and chair of the firm’s International Employment Law practice, added that,

“We’re excited to join with this talented group of 20 lawyers who have a well-earned reputation for counseling employers in Brussels and across Europe. Reliance has a great track record, and our clients from across the region and around the world should start seeing immediate value as a result of this combination.”