



50 YRS

VIAC at 50: The Legacy and Future of
Dispute Resolution in the Heart of Europe

 PROGRAMME



VIAC at 50: The Legacy and Future of
Dispute Resolution in the Heart of Europe

PROGRAMME

13:30 Welcome coffee and registration

- *VIAC Documentary Part I* -

14:00 Welcome remarks

Nikolaus Pitkowicz, VIAC President,
Pitkowicz & Partners

14:05 Video messages

Anna Sporrer, Austrian Minister of Justice
Anna Joubin-Bret, Secretary of UNCITRAL
Stanimir Alexandrov, ICCA President

14:20 Keynote: Building bridges:
Austria's contribution to peace
and prosperity in the region

Michael Linhart, Former Austrian Minister
of European and International Affairs

14:50 The third edition of the
VIAC Handbook -
a Practitioner's Guide

Niamh Leinwather, VIAC Secretary
General

15:05 Viennesse coffee house break
sponsored by Secretariat

VIAC at 50: The Legacy and Future of
Dispute Resolution in the Heart of Europe

PROGRAMME

- *VIAC Documentary Part II* -

15:35 Keynote: International arbitration:
Life in the old dog yet?
Michael Polkinghorne, White & Case

16:05 The future of dispute resolution
in a changing Europe: The role
of VIAC
Crenguta Leaua, Bucharest University of
Economics & LDDP
Ina C. Popova, Debevoise & Plimpton
Galina Zukova, Zukova Legal
Moderation: Patrizia Netal, VIAC Vice-
President, KNOETZL

- *VIAC Documentary Part III* -

17:20 Closing remarks
Franz Schwarz, VIAC Vice-President,
WilmerHale

SPEAKERS



Nikolaus Pitkowitz

Pitkowitz & Partners

Nikolaus Pitkowitz is founding partner and head of dispute resolution at Pitkowitz & Partners, and President of the Vienna International Arbitral Centre (VIAC). He is considered one of the leading arbitration practitioners and ranked among others, as the number one Austrian dispute resolution lawyer. He has acted as party counsel and arbitrator in over 130 international arbitrations, in a range of cases, located in Europe, the United States and Asia. He also acted as party counsel in many complex litigation proceedings, including cases of great public interest and cases before the European Court of Justice.

Nikolaus frequently speaks, lectures and is author of over 50 publications, including a monograph on Setting Aside Arbitral Awards. He is editor of the Handbook on Third Party Funding in International Arbitration (2nd ed. 2025) and co-editor of the Austrian Yearbook on International Arbitration. He is co-chair of the ILA Committee on Conflict-of-laws Issues in International Arbitration.

Pitkowitz & Partners is ranked by GAR 100 among the world's leading arbitration firms.

SPEAKERS

Niamh Leinwather

VIAC

Since 1 January 2022, Niamh Leinwather has taken office as the Secretary General of the Vienna International Arbitral Centre (VIAC). Of Irish origin, Niamh has both a common and civil law background (Bachelor of Civil Law, University College Dublin, Mag.iur., University of Vienna, Master of European Studies, University of Vienna). She was the first Irish woman to be admitted to the Austrian Bar in 2013 and has over a decade of experience in international dispute resolution at Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer in Vienna where she acted as both counsel and arbitrator.

Niamh has held the office of Secretary Treasurer of the International Federation of Commercial Arbitration Institutions (IFCAI) since February 2023. In July 2024 Niamh was appointed to the Board of Directors of Arbitral Women and chairs the Education Committee. In October 2024 Niamh was invited to her alma mater as an Adjunct Professor of the Sutherland School of Law (University College Dublin). She also lectures at the Austrian Arbitration Academy at the University of Vienna and regularly publishes in the field of arbitration.



SPEAKERS



@BKA/Andy Wenzel

Anna Sporrer

Austrian Minister of Justice

Anna Sporrer has been Austria's Federal Minister of Justice since March 2025. With a doctorate in law from the University of Vienna, she previously served as Vice President of the Supreme Administrative Court.

She co-founded the NGO "Frauen-Rechtsschutz", supporting women's access to justice, and has held positions on multiple arbitration and advisory boards related to ethics and human rights. Known for championing gender equality, she chaired the Equal Treatment Commission.

Anna also taught law at Austrian universities and advised the European Commission as a legal expert in the field of gender equality law. Her career blends deep legal knowledge with a commitment to equality, human rights, and democratic values.



SPEAKERS

Stanimir Alexandrov

ICCA President

Stanimir Alexandrov has served as an arbitrator in numerous investor-state and commercial arbitrations. He has been appointed to the Chairman's list of ICSID's Panel of Arbitrators and the rosters of various arbitral institutions.



Stanimir is the current President of the International Council for Commercial Arbitration (ICCA) and a member of the Institut de Droit International.

Until August 2017, he was co-chair of the international arbitration practice at Sidley Austin LLP. Stanimir is consistently recognised as a leader in the field of international arbitration. Before entering private practice, Stanimir was vice minister of foreign affairs of Bulgaria.

He has taught courses in international law and arbitration for almost 30 years as an adjunct professor at The George Washington University Law School and has authored numerous books and articles. Stanimir has a doctoral degree in law from The George Washington University Law School.

SPEAKERS



Anna Joubin-Bret

UNCITRAL

Anna Joubin-Bret is the Secretary of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) and the Director of the International Trade Law Division in the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations, which functions as the substantive secretariat for UNCITRAL. She is the ninth Secretary of the Commission since it was established by the General Assembly in 1966.

Prior to her appointment on 24 November 2017, Anna practiced law in Paris, specialising in International Investment Law and Investment Dispute Resolution. She focused on serving as counsel, arbitrator, mediator and conciliator in international investment disputes. She served as arbitrator in several ICSID, UNCITRAL and ICC disputes. Prior to 2011 and for 15 years, Anna was the Senior Legal Adviser for the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). She edited and authored seminal research and publications on international investment law, notably the Sequels to UNCTAD IIA Series and co-edited with Jean Kalicki a book on Reform of Investor-State Dispute Settlement in 2015.

Anna holds a post-graduate degree (DEA) in Private International Law from the University of Paris I, Panthéon-Sorbonne, a Masters Degree in International Economic Law from University Paris I and in Political Science from Institut d'Etudes Politiques.

SPEAKERS

Michael Linhart

Former Austrian Minister of European and International Affairs

Michael Linhart is one of Austria's foremost foreign policy experts. After multiple Ambassadorial appointments, including to Paris and Berlin, Michael served as Secretary General in the Austrian Ministry of European and International Affairs, and then, in 2021, as the Austrian Minister of European and International Affairs.



Since May 2025, Michael serves as president of the Europa Forum Wachau, a leading think tank that promotes exchange and debate on European issues. Since 1995, around 35 prime ministers, 45 foreign and European ministers, 5 commissioners and over 13,000 guests have taken part in the Wachau European Forum to shape European policy guidelines and provide impetus for development processes in Europe.



SPEAKERS



Michael Polkinghorne

White & Case

Michael Polkinghorne is a Franco-Australian dual-qualified lawyer based in Paris, heading White & Case's Paris arbitration group and co-leading the firm's pro bono practice.

Specialising in arbitration and litigation, he has served as counsel and arbitrator under all major institutional rules. Formerly the Australian member of the ICC's International Court of Arbitration, Michael has handled disputes in over thirty countries and has significant mediation experience in the industrial gas and renewables sectors. He has served as an arbitrator in over two dozen cases, primarily in the energy sector, under various arbitration rules including ICC, LCIA, and UNCITRAL.

Michael is a member of the panel of arbitrators for multiple international arbitration centers, including the BVI International Arbitration Centre and the Asian International Arbitration Centre. He is also listed on the Global Arbitrators and Counsel Lists of the Office of the Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and Programmes.



SPEAKERS

Patrizia Netal

KNOETZL

Patrizia Netal, partner at KNOETZL and co-head of its International Arbitration Practice Group, has longstanding experience as counsel and arbitrator in commercial arbitration and investment disputes. Her work focuses on complex and high stakes disputes in construction and engineering, energy, post M&A disputes, aerospace, distribution and international sales.

Since 2022, she is a Vice-President of the Vienna International Arbitral Centre (VIAC) and has been a board member since 2020.

Beyond her legal practice, Patrizia is a director of the Willem C. Vis International Commercial Arbitration Moot, the largest international student competition in the fields of arbitration and commercial law, an event that annually gathers thousands of practitioners and students in Vienna.

She lectures at the Austrian Arbitration Academy at the University of Vienna and regularly publishes in the field of arbitration. Recognised by global directories as a leading expert, she was also named among the GAR “45 under 45” worldwide. Patrizia also represents Austria in the Pledge for Equal Representation in Arbitration, supporting diversity and inclusion in the field.



SPEAKERS



Crenguta Leaua

Bucharest University of Economics &
LDDP

Professor Crenguta Leaua teaches new technologies law and comparative international arbitration law at the Bucharest University of Economics. She was a visiting scholar at Columbia University (New York) and invited as guest lecturer by universities in US, France, Switzerland etc.

Ranked as Thought Leader in Arbitration (WWL Legal), she is a founder of LDDP law firm in Romania and practices as an arbitrator based in Switzerland. She is a member of the SVAMC List of the World's Leading Technology Neutrals – the Tech List® and listed for investment arbitrations at ICSID and CIETAC, free trade agreements disputes (listed by the European Union's treaties), and for commercial arbitrations with WIPO, VIAC, CIETAC, SHIAC arbitral centers in Romania, Moldova, Poland, and Slovenia. She sits frequently in cases under the UNCITRAL rules, in LCIA and ICC arbitrations, and has been appointed by centers such as CAM or Danish Arbitration Institute.

A past vice-president of the International Court of Arbitration ICC Paris, member of the board of directors of The Silicon Valley Arbitration and Mediation Center, expert on technology-related disputes at UNCITRAL, corresponding member of UNIDROIT, she currently also focuses on interdisciplinary problem solving as a director of The Swiss Institute for Alternative Thinking.

SPEAKERS

Ina C. Popova

Debevoise & Plimpton

Ina Popova is a partner in Debevoise & Plimpton's International Dispute Resolution Group whose practice focuses on international arbitration, international litigation and public international law.



Ina is admitted to practice in New York and Paris and speaks French, Spanish, Italian and Bulgarian.

She sits as arbitrator and serves as counsel in a broad range of international matters and has particular experience in the energy, mining, and technology, media and telecommunications sectors.

Ina also holds several leadership positions, including as a delegate to the ICC Commission on Arbitration and ADR and a former Member of the ICC International Court of Arbitration.



SPEAKERS



Galina Zukova

ZUKOVA Legal

Dually qualified in Paris and Latvia, Galina Zukova (ZUKOVA Legal, Paris) is a leading arbitration practitioner with nearly thirty years of legal experience. Before founding her own firm in 2019, Galina was a Partner with a boutique law firm and a lawyer in the top International Arbitration Practice Group of a major international law firm based in Paris. Prior to this, she worked as Counsel at the ICC International Court of Arbitration. Her previous work experience also includes the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, a leading Baltic law firm and the Latvian European Integration Bureau (Latvian Government), where she was in charge of the legal aspects of Latvia's accession to the European Union.

Galina is a Member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, a Council Member of the Armenian International Arbitration Centre, a Council Member of the ICC Institute of World Business Law, and a Member of the ICC Commission on Arbitration and ADR. In the past, she was also a member to the ICC Court, a Board Member of the Finnish Arbitration Institute and a Board Member of the Georgian International Arbitration Centre. In 2022, Alina was included in the European Commission's List of Candidates Suitable for Appointment as Arbitrators in EU trade and investment agreements with third states. She is also an Associate Professor at the University of Versailles Saint-Quentin (Paris-Saclay).

Galina is fluent in English, French, Italian, Latvian, Russian and Spanish. She has a working knowledge of German.



SPEAKERS

Franz T. Schwarz

WilmerHale

Franz Schwarz provides strategic counsel and powerful advocacy in bet-the-company international arbitration matters.

He is a globally recognized leader in the field and been involved in more than 300 international arbitration proceedings as party representative and arbitrator, before all major arbitral institutions and in arbitration venues around the world.

Franz is Global Vice-Chair of the International Arbitration practice group at WilmerHale and has particular experience with disputes regarding joint ventures and M&A; financial services, project finance and fintech; energy and infrastructure; life sciences; commercial transactions; and corporate law issues; as well as investment protection.

Franz is qualified in Austria and in England and Wales. He regularly writes on pertinent issues of arbitration law and has taught at leading universities around the world, including at Harvard, LSE, Johns Hopkins (Bologna), Zurich, and Vienna.



VIAC at 50: The Legacy and Future of
Dispute Resolution in the Heart of Europe

SPONSORS



Secretariat's disputes and forensics experts are trusted in the highest-stakes legal, risk, and regulatory matters around the world. With more than 600 professionals in key commercial and arbitration centers, renowned law firms, leading corporations, and governmental entities turn to our financial, investigations, engineering, economic, and data advisory expertise when the stakes are high — supporting them with meticulous preparation, insightful analysis, and persuasive communications.

Our bright minds and passionate problem-solvers put their analytical and strategic insights to work in the fast-paced commercial sectors that drive the global economy. Quality, integrity, and independence are woven into every aspect of our work. But, most importantly, when success is on the line, our globally integrated teams thrive on working through the most daunting problems in ways that remove uncertainty and instill confidence.

VIAC at 50: The Legacy and Future of
Dispute Resolution in the Heart of Europe

SPONSORS

AlixPartners

AlixPartners is a results-driven global consulting firm that specializes in helping businesses respond quickly and decisively to their most critical challenges—from urgent performance improvement to complex restructuring, from risk mitigation to accelerated transformation.

When a client is facing a dispute, we work with them and their legal advisors on every aspect of the case continuum, from early case assessment discovery or disclosure phases, through to expert evidence and trial. We have deep experience in arbitration, litigation and mediation settings throughout the world on issues that really matter.

Our Disputes & Expert Services professionals are accountants, Econ PhDs, and financial analysts with key credentials and certifications (Chartered Accountants (FCA, ACA and ACCA), Certified Public Accountant (CPA), Accredited Senior Appraiser (ASA), the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) designation, Certified in Financial Forensics (CFF)). Our experts have successfully testified in international, state, federal and bankruptcy courts, as well as in arbitration proceedings.

Our team of professionals provides expert consulting services in a variety of disputes, including valuation and quantum analysis, contractual and shareholder disputes, investor-state arbitration, intellectual property conflicts, and expert witness testimony.

In the moments when everything is on the line, we stand shoulder to shoulder with our clients until the job is done, and only measure our success in terms of the results we deliver. We partner with our clients to make the right decisions and take the right actions. When it really matters.



Vienna International Arbitral Centre (VIAC)

Wiedner Hauptstrasse 63

1045 Vienna

Austria

+43 (0)5 90 900 4398

office@viac.eu

www.viac.eu