

PLMJ co-founder to go solo in Lisbon

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José Miguel Júdice

Portuguese practitioner and PLMJ co-founder **José Miguel Júdice** is leaving the firm after more than four decades to go solo as an arbitrator.

Júdice will leave PLMJ on 1 January next year, having joined as a trainee in 1976. He will continue to be based in Lisbon and says he will remain active as an arbitrator in Europe, Africa and the Americas.

He had already stepped down from his position as co-head of arbitration last year, with **Pedro Metello de Nápoles** taking sole charge of the practice. In January, Júdice took on a new role of counsel, 40 years after he was first made partner.

One of Portugal's most high-profile arbitration practitioners, Júdice is a former ICC Court member and is on the arbitrator lists of ICSID – for which he was recently re-designated for a second six-year term – the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, and other institutions in Brazil, Portugal, Spain, Mozambique, the British Virgin Islands and Korea.

He is also an active member of the arbitration community, serving as president of the Portuguese Chamber of Commerce's Arbitration Centre, a board member of the Spanish Arbitration Club, and a former board member of the Portuguese Arbitration Association.

Júdice also helped draft his country's [2011 arbitration law](#) and lectures at a number of Portuguese universities.

Speaking to *GAR*, Júdice says that leaving is not an easy decision, but one he had taken a number of years ago.

These days Júdice says he is working "much more as arbitrator than as counsel," and that to develop this practice further is made difficult by the conflicts of interest created by working at PLMJ. He says that conflicts are worse for "large law firms in small markets than in larger worldwide law firms."

Júdice says he also wants to create more time for his other "lives" – allowing him to become more active in his lecturing and giving him time to write a treatise on international commercial arbitration, which should be published next year.

The Portuguese arbitrator says he is also preparing to write a book on international political and social trends in our century, but also hopes to create more time for reading books and watching films for leisure.

Finally, he says that quitting the partnership "it is the right thing to do even for founding fathers."

Although the firm was first established by António Maria Pereira and Luis Sáragga Leal in the late 1960s, Júdice and another partner, Francisco de Oliveira Martins, joined in the middle of the next decade to create PLMJ.

Today PLMJ says it is Portugal's largest law firm, with more than 300 lawyers, at least 100 of which are disputes focused.

Since his first appointment as counsel in 1977, Júdice has represented parties in more than 80 arbitrations and sat on the tribunal in 50 more.

Two decades after joining the firm, Júdice started focusing entirely on dispute resolution, and in 2013 founded PLMJ's dedicated arbitration practice, which now features 17 practitioners in Lisbon, Oporto, Algarve, Mozambique, Angola and Macao.

PLMJ was the first Portuguese firm to act in an ICSID case, brought against Guinea by the firm's French port investor client Getma International. It was also the first Portuguese firm to be ranked in the *GAR* 100.

In 2014, Júdice chaired a Permanent Court of Arbitration tribunal that [awarded](#) UK electricity company Rurelec \$29 million in its treaty claim against Bolivia. He has also recently chaired ICC arbitrations seated in Lisbon, Madrid, Zurich, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

Júdice speaks English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.

PLMJ's head of arbitration de Nápoles says that when Júdice announced a couple of years ago that he would leave the firm at the end of this year, "no one believed him," saying it is "difficult to imagine" the firm without the person who build its arbitration team from scratch.

He continues that Júdice is "a workaholic," unable to spend even two days on holiday without emailing the team about cases. "So even today some of my partners ask me if he is really going to leave."

"Funny stories apart, I have worked closely with him on a more or less regular basis since 1996, so one can imagine what that means to me".

De Nápoles says Júdice has prepared his succession and the "future looks bright" for PLMJ. "In any event, it is good to know that José Miguel will not be retiring any time soon and will continue his work as arbitrator, so we are bound to see him around."

Manuel Conthe, president of the Spanish Court of Arbitration, says Júdice "strikes me as a very seasoned, balanced arbitrator, who combines diplomatic skills, business experience and sensitivity to public interests."

Dechert partner **Eduardo Silva Romero** says he has appeared before Júdice a few times and "experienced the excellence of his work as arbitrator."

"PLMJ is certainly losing its leading arbitration light but the arbitration community is gaining an outstanding arbitrator who, now free of the conflicts naturally arising out of international law firms, should be very much on demand for commercial and investment cases held in English, French, Spanish or Portuguese."