

# BÄR & KARRER: WHY WE WORK A LOT WITH ITALY

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(Translation: Alessio Foderi, article « Bär & Karrer: ecco perché lavoriamo molto con l'Italia » published on [MAG 95](#))

There is a law firm that arises among the top thirty firms that worked on the merger and acquisition operations that took place in Italy in 2017. It is ranked 22nd in The Mergermarket league table by value of follow-up operations, cross-referenced with the transactions news reported by [legalcommunity.it](#) during the year ([have a glimpse at MAG 94](#)). This is not an Italian firm, but a historic Swiss company: Bär & Karrer. Founded in 1969 in Zurich, this law firm operates as a public company, and arrived later in Lugano in 1992, in Zug in 1995 and in Geneva in 2000.

Specifically, the firm worked last year on three dossiers involving at least one Italian actor: the acquisition by AZ Swiss & Partners (Swiss subsidiary of the Azimut Group) of the entire capital of SDB Financial Solutions (with a team of **Paolo Bottini**, **Edoardo Buzzi** and **Paolo Ader** who supported the buyer); the purchase of Allfunds Bank from Santander Asset Management and Intesa Sanpaolo (with **Eric Stupp** and **Stephanie Walte** alongside the financing banks Goldman Sachs and Bank of America Merrill Lynch); and the takeover of a 70% share of the Apollonia Dental Project by Swiss Smile Schweiz (assisted by **Ricardo Marino**, **Lukas Scherer** and **Susanne Schreiber**).

«When the firm decided to open an office in Ticino, it did that aiming to follow the local clientele in the first place, but also to create a bridge within the Italian market», Paolo Bottini (pictured), partner, comments to *MAG*, talking about 2017 results. «We achieved that by always advising on Swiss law,

following, for example, companies or people resident in Italy with interests in Switzerland and vice versa. An activity that is still partly carried out in Zurich», the professional explains. This is how Bär & Karrer has become over the years one of the main players in legal advice regarding corporate and m&a activities. But their business it's not only about that. The firm is often involved in international arbitrations that also concern Italian companies, as well as Swiss ones. «This is because we have a linguistic command of Italian, and because, big international firms have in-house only few lawyers who practice these activities. Indeed, we have two or three colleagues specialized in arbitration», Bottini explains.

Historically, the lawyer recalls, Bär & Karrer was the first German-speaking Swiss practice to open an office in Ticino, remaining the only player of the canton bordering Italy till the early 2000s, when two other Swiss firms have settled in the area. However, Bär & Karrer still remains one of the the Swiss companies present in the three linguistic regions of the country, German-speaking, Italian-speaking and French-speaking.

In order to become a privileged interlocutor of Italian business firms, the brand has developed continuous contacts over time with our local law firms, including, to name a few, BonelliErede, Maisto and Associati, Gop and Nctm. «We really collaborate with many Italian firms, and this is why we don't have any exclusive relationship with anyone», Bottini specifies.

That's why, nowadays, about a third of the Lugano office's foreign activities involve Italy. Yet the firm does not have the option, at least for now, of opening an office in our country, or in any other. «From a strategic point of view, we remain a Swiss firm, we have no expansionist aims. Our objective is to grow organically», Bottini explains. «Our structure, in terms of services, is already quite varied and covers different areas of law so, currently, we have no particular plans, except to enhance what is already there», he continues.

When it comes to the possibility of joining some international law firm, the lawyer explains how Switzerland has never actually entered the radar of the great American and London law firms. «Our country was not touched by the wave of the Magic Circle firms arriving to Italy a few years ago, perhaps the size of our market was not interesting enough for them - the partner says - and even afterwards we did not happen to receive integration offers». Yet, the Swiss market, according to the lawyer, is dynamic and interesting. By narrowing our gaze to Ticino, there you can find companies headed by multinationals from the fashion, commodity trading, automotive and pharmaceutical sectors. Some of these groups have a European or EMEA headquarters in Lugano or surroundings, including Acer, Lastminute.it and Guess Europe, for example. In the Swiss legal context, the game of competitiveness is therefore played between equals, among national law firms. Not being affiliated with big international names does not worry local firm, that are still working a lot, beyond Italy, with the United States, Germany and France. «Our experience shows us that actually what matters to the clients is not so much the integrated network but the quality of the counsel in the individual countries. As we are not part of a larger project, we can always choose to collaborate with the best professionals in each market, thus offering clients the best services», Bottini explains.