



# Creating A BETTER JUSTICE SYSTEM

FOLLOWING HIS LEGAL STUDIES IN LONDON, CHRISTOS GALANOS IS CURRENTLY PURSUING A LEGAL CAREER AS AN ASSOCIATE AT ONE OF THE BIGGEST LAW FIRMS IN CYPRUS, MICHAEL KYPRIANOU & CO. LLC. A MEMBER OF THE FIRM'S LITIGATION TEAM, GALANOS TELLS GOLD ABOUT HIS INTEREST IN SHAREHOLDER DISPUTE CASES, THE GROWING NUMBER OF NEW CYPRIOT LAW GRADUATES AND THE IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED IF THE COUNTRY'S LEGAL SYSTEM IS TO FUNCTION EFFICIENTLY.

BY ARTEMIS CONSTANTINIDOU | PHOTO BY CHRISTOS TSEKOURAS

**t**ell us about your work at Michael Kyprianou & Co LLC.  
**Christos Galanos:** I qualified as a lawyer in Cyprus in 2012 and I have since been a member of the firm's litigation team, specializing in commercial and cross-border litigation. As a lawyer at Michael Kyprianou & Co LLC, I have been exposed to high-profile and challenging cases. The cross-border nature of many of these cases means that not only do I have the privilege of working alongside some of the country's most renowned litigators but also of working alongside Queen's Counsel, reputable English law firms and inspiring lawyers from many jurisdictions.

**Gold: What is the aspect of your work that you most enjoy?**  
**C.G.:** A client's case is, in one sense,

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a problem that needs to be solved as quickly and as efficiently as possible. The first steps in tackling the problem are to brainstorm possible solutions, to conduct research on the merits and viability of the solutions being considered and to

then decide on a clear strategy. It is this problem-solving aspect of my work that I most enjoy.

**Gold: Can you tell us about memorable cases you have worked on?**  
**C.G.:** I consider the shareholder disputes that I have worked on to be extremely interesting. Some of these cases involved a simple falling-out between the shareholders of a group of companies. Litigation in such cases is intended to safeguard our client's rights under the relevant shareholders' or other agreement. Other shareholder disputes involve defending clients from what are often referred to as "raider attacks" – a term that refers to the concerted efforts of a particular shareholder to buy out the company at an undervalue by attacking it or the other shareholders. This is usually done by filing various lawsuits against the company or the shareholders, complaints to tax authorities and to the police and through other litigious or non-litigious actions. These cases are, by nature, complex, multifaceted and usu-

ally multijurisdictional. Not only do they require a deep understanding of all the issues and careful planning but they also demand constant and close coordination between all the law firms handling them across the various jurisdictions.

**Gold: The number of Cypriot law graduates has been increasing in recent years. How do you view this trend and will it affect the local legal sector in a positive or a negative way?**

**C.G.:** The increasing influx of new Cypriot law graduates is, in my opinion, the result of inadequate career counselling. The local legal sector may be growing too but it is questionable whether it will be able to absorb all new law graduates. The trend may be unfortunate for current and future law graduates but, strictly speaking, it should lead to an improvement in the quality of the local legal sector. The fact that supply outstrips demand creates a more competitive environment that sifts out the best.

**Gold: What, in your view, are the main problems currently facing the legal system?**

**C.G.:** The delay in the trial of cases is the most evident problem. The large backlog of cases means that clients are left in an uncertain position for an unnecessarily long period of time. This in and of itself is a form of injustice. At the same time I am very proud of our legal system. We are privileged to have inherited a common law system which has time after time proved to be a “living law”, able to adapt and to always grant justice in a world that is constantly changing.

**Gold: To what extent do you consider the establishment of the Administrative Court to have helped speed up certain processes in the justice system?**

**C.G.:** I believe it is too soon to answer this question as the Administrative Court

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has only been sitting for about a year now. It will take a few years for us to fully appreciate the extent of the Administrative Court’s contribution.

**Gold: What are the main changes that could be made, either by the government or the Supreme Court, for the legal system to operate more efficiently?**

**C.G.:** The most intuitive response to your question is to appoint more judges. This, however, will not be enough if we do not also improve the procedures and the institutions of the legal system. One step in this direction is the creation of a commercial court and I am glad to see that this is already being planned. Further measures that could be taken are, for example, the creation of a clear framework for filing class actions. This would avoid mass filings for cases that involve a sizeable portion of the population. Another example would be to require a party to obtain the court’s leave before filing an appeal on an intermedi-

ary judgment. This would avoid judgments being appealed without reasonable grounds, something which often delays the first instance proceedings while also unnecessarily increasing the Supreme Court’s case load. Furthermore the court registrar’s archives and filing system should, in my opinion, be digitized. The legal system’s delays are not just delays in the trial of actions but also delays in the court registrar’s administrative functions. The possibility of filing, serving and searching claims and related documents digitally will save great time and resources. Finally, the active promotion of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, such as mediation or arbitration, is also extremely important as a more frequent recourse to such mechanisms will lead to fewer cases ending up in Court.

**Gold: How do you view recent developments in the Cyprus issue and what do you see as the potential benefits of a solution?**

**C.G.:** I am neither optimistic nor pessimistic about the likelihood of a solution. The international scene is a fast-changing one and positive circumstances can quickly be reversed. I have learned not to get my hopes up too easily. Regarding the potential benefits of a solution, the first thing to note is that a viable and lasting solution will be priceless. Economic factors are only secondary to the mending of old wounds and planting the seeds for a nation of peace and stability. But moving past this primary premise, I do believe that a solution will not just mend the deep wounds of the past but will also open up new horizons for our country. The island’s local market will be enlarged, more opportunities will be available for trading with neighbouring countries and the stability that will ensue will also lead to a substantial increase in investments. 

**Thanks to Caffè Nero Engomi, where the photograph was taken.**