

Chris Watkinson

Partner



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Prague

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Overview

Chris Watkinson is an English law qualified partner based in Prague, Czech Republic, where he co-heads the Corporate group. Chris focuses on cross-border M&A, complex joint venture, private equity and venture capital transactions. He brings a wealth of experience in CEE/CIS, advising on major cross-border deals and providing English Law advice to clients based in the region.

Experience

- **Brand Embassy:** Advising the founders in relation to a sale of their technology company to NICE UK Limited.
- **Liberty Global:** Advising the world's largest international TV and broadband company on its approx. US\$800 million acquisition of Multimedia Polska, Poland's number three cable operator.
- **Group Spadel:** Advising a European family-owned company specializing in the production of natural mineral water, spring water and natural fruit drinks, on the acquisition of a 93.29 percent stake in Devin AD, the market-leading producer of bottled water in Bulgaria, from private equity firm Advent International.
- **Rockaway Capital:** Advising on the consolidation of their e-Commerce platform and related business assets within a joint venture with PPF and EPH.
- **Rockaway Capital:** Advising on the acquisition of the price comparison website of Naspers Group operating in Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria (in Hungary trading under the name of arukereso.hu).
- **IVI.ru:** Advising on the Series E investment round in which a consortium of investors, including RDIF, acquired a minority investment in the Russian online media business.
- **Baring Vostok:** Advising on the acquisition of a 25 percent stake in Pulkovo Airport, Moscow.
- **Best Hotel Properties and Westmont:** Advising on the sale of the Hotel Intercontinental Prague to the Czech investment group R2G.
- **BNP Paribas:** Advising on the sale of its subsidiary Findomestic banka Beograd to Serbian lender Direktna Banka Kragujevac.

- **WayRay:** Advising Swiss holographic augmented reality (AR) solution startup, WayRay on its US\$80 million Series C financing round.
- **Apeiron Investment Group:** Advising on various equity investments, including equity investment in Rezolve Limited (mobile commerce technology company); equity investment and related acquisitions of BlueBank Platforms and MyFinanceClub (retail lending platforms); and Series A investment round and equity funding to Compass Pathfinder Holdings Limited.
- **Harpeiron:** Advising an investment vehicle established by various venture capital investors on their equity investment in Bluebank Technology Finance Holdings Limited (UK).
- **Dreamlines:** Advising a German travel agency on the acquisition of Sunshine Cruise Holidays.
- **EDF:** Advising on the sale of the Group's conventional power plant assets in Poland.

Representative experience from Chris' previous practice includes:

Mergers and Acquisitions

- **O2 Czech Republic:** Advising PPF Group NV in connection with its €2.5 billion acquisition of O2 Czech Republic from Telefónica Czech Republic.
- **PPF Real Estate:** Advising on the acquisition of a majority stake in entities which own the Trilogy Park Tomilino warehouse complex in Moscow.
- **Valeant Pharmaceuticals:** Advising on the €314 million acquisition of Sanitas AB, a Lithuanian based generic pharmaceutical manufacturer.
- **Raleigh Cycles:** Advising the client on the sale of share capital to Accell Group.
- **Spectrum Vision:** Advising the shareholders of a Russian contact lens distributor on the sale of the company to Johnson & Johnson.
- **BCM Group:** Advising the shareholders of a UK fund manager on its sale to listed Austrian fund manager C-Quadrat Investment AG.
- **World Wine Investors:** Advising a prominent Argentinian industrialist on the acquisition of a UK based global wine distributor.
- **Atlas Copco:** Advising a Swedish listed industrial group on the acquisition of the medical gas division of Penlon Limited.
- **Taiga Mistral:** Advising a Spanish wind farm developer on the acquisition of a stake in a 40MW Polish wind farm.

Private Equity, Venture Capital and Joint Ventures

- **Rockaway Capital:** Advising an investment firm focused on building the internet economy in emerging markets on sale of shares in Chytrý Honza a.s, a Czech online financial portal and related investment and joint venture structuring with Aegon.
- **Polska Telefonica:** Advising T-Mobile (Deutsche Telecom) on a joint venture and network sharing arrangements with Orange (France Telecom).
- **Telconet Capital:** Advising on a joint venture between AF Telecom and Telconet Capital (combining the Russian telecom networks of Megafon and Scartel).
- **Van Riet Capital:** Advising on a contested US\$100 million management buyout of Karta Realty Limited (pursuant to contractual right of first refusal), and related financing provided by PPF group.
- **Taiga Mistral:** Advising on the acquisition of the majority stake in a 40MW Polish wind farm project (from

Recognition

- Chris has been recognized as a foreign expert for UK in Corporate/M&A by *Chambers Global* 2019. One client states: "Chris has always delivered high-quality service and goes out of his way to meet client needs. He is an excellent technical lawyer with expertise in complex M&A transactions." – *Chambers Global* 2019
- Chris is a recommended commercial, corporate and M&A lawyer by *Legal 500 EMEA* 2019 and endorsed as a highly regarded M&A and private equity lawyer by *IFLR1000* 2020.

In the Media

- "Dentons advises Swiss augmented reality leader WayRay AG on US\$80 million Series C round", Dentons press release, September 24, 2018
- "Dentons advises Spadel on acquisition of a majority stake in Devin, Bulgaria's leading water bottling company, from Advent", Dentons press release, December 20, 2016
- "Dentons advises Liberty Global on approx US\$800 million acquisition of Multimedia Polska", Dentons press release, October 19, 2016
- "Dentons strengthens its M&A and Private Equity practices in CEE with the recruitment of Partner Chris Watkinson", Dentons press release, June 23, 2016

Activities and Affiliations

Memberships

- Solicitor of the Senior Courts of England and Wales
- Established European Advocate, Czech Bar Association

Prior and Present Employment

- Partner, Dentons, Prague (2016-Present)
- Head of English Law Desk, BBH, advokátní kancelář, Prague (2014-2016)
- Senior Associate/ Associate, Squire Patton Boggs, UK (2003-2014)
- Trainee, Squire Patton Boggs, UK (2001-2003)

Areas of focus

Practices

- Corporate
- Joint Ventures
- Mergers and Acquisitions
- Private Equity
- Venture Capital

Industry sectors

- Communications
- Private Equity
- Technology
- Renewable Energy

Region

- Europe
- Central and Eastern Europe

Education

- Nottingham Trent University, 2001, Legal Practice Course
- University of East Anglia, 1999, LLB (Hons), Law with North American Legal Systems
- University of British Columbia, 1998, Exchange year

Admissions and qualifications

- Solicitor, Senior Courts of England and Wales

Languages

- English