

Israel

An active agency and a fertile class action landscape keep Israel's competition bar well supplied with behavioural work. Broad investigations of high-profile domestic industries means scores of Israeli companies needing defence, while foreign companies are increasingly looking for guidance when completing their own transactions.

Elite

Fischer Behar Chen Well Orion & Co boasts the largest competition team in Israel. Peers say the firm is renowned for its involvement in all areas of competition law, acting for both domestic and international companies. The firm's antitrust practice has a tripartite leadership, shared by managing partner Reuven Behar, *Who's Who Legal* nominee Tal Eyal-Boger and partner Talya Solomon. Litigation specialist Tamar Turjeman-Kedem, who spent five years at the Antitrust Authority, completes the partnership.

This year saw the addition of Google as an important new client; the firm is taking on a range of confidential matters for the technology giant. Tnuva, Israel's largest dairy company, is also a significant source of work for the firm. Eyal-Boger secured the dismissal of a class action claiming 1 billion shekels for an alleged price-fixing agreement, and negotiated a 3 million shekel settlement with Israel's Antitrust Authority over alleged non-provision of information. The firm is also defending Tnuva against a class action lawsuit claiming it abused its monopoly in the cottage cheese market.

Fischer Behar is acting for Israel Discount Bank in a broad range of antitrust matters, including appealing against the decision of the general director that it was involved in illegal information exchange and a class action relating to the alleged coordination of interest rates. It also represented leading Israeli energy company Sonol in private antitrust proceedings claiming 1 billion shekels (€208 million) for alleged restrictive agreements, which was struck out by the District Court in February. On behalf of Berman Bakery, it also secured the dismissal of a class action alleging restrictive arrangements between Israel's leading bakeries. Regular international clients include Intel, Johnson & Johnson and Phibro Animal Health Corporation.

Consistently regarded as one of Israel's leading antitrust practices, **Tadmor & Co** has an experienced team of partners that together cover all aspects of competition law. Managing partner and practice co-leader David Tadmor, a *Who's Who Legal* nominee, and co-head Shai Bakal are well known in the competition community. Tadmor was director general of Israel's Antitrust Authority between 1997 and 2001, while Bakal worked at the authority for five years, first in its legal department and then as head of the mergers unit. They are joined in the partnership by litigation experts David Gideoni and Ittai Paldor, both of whom have also worked at the Antitrust Authority.

The team's behavioural work includes virtually all the segments of the Israeli economy. Cases it has been involved in

include representing the First International Bank of Israel in the IAA's investigation of information exchange between Israeli banks, and Siemens in the authority's investigation of cartel between geographic information system providers. Gideoni and Paldor are also representing clients in criminal antitrust cases in the water and real estate sectors.

The merger practice remains very busy, and the firm prides itself on its ability to secure quick clearances: it represented Silver Lake Partners in its acquisition of Dell, Blackstone in the acquisition of Kodak and Korean Air and Czech Airlines in a merger that gained approval in 10 days. The firm also acted for Azrieli Group in its appeal against the authority's decision to block its acquisition of the One Plaza shopping centre.

Well regarded among his peers, *Who's Who Legal* nominee Niv Zecler leads a modestly sized but high-quality team at **Weinstock-Zecler & Co**. Zecler is supported by two partners, Ofer Argov and Eran Zach. The firm saw the departure of one associate and the addition of two last year, bringing its total to five.

The firm offers a full-service competition practice, handling both transactional and behavioural matters. In the food market, it acted for dairy company Strauss in civil damage proceedings concerning an alleged attempt to exclude Cadbury from the market. It is also representing Angel Bakeries and some of its officers against allegations of collusion and price fixing, and is acting for the Israeli Association of Builders and Mer Technologies in ongoing proceedings before the District Court.

Continuing on the behavioural side, the firm is defending a major gas company in its appeal against a monopoly ruling, and is also defending companies in the technology and water industries against allegations of collusion. On the merger side, it helped negotiate approval for a joint venture between telecoms companies Pelephone and Mirs, and aided Superbus in successfully opposing the tie-up between two rival bus operators. The firm acts as regular counsel to several large Israeli companies, including telecoms incumbent Bezeq and fertiliser company Haifa Chemical.

Highly recommended

Who's Who Legal entrant Eytan Epstein shares the antitrust leadership at **Epstein Chomsky Osnat & Co & Gilat Knoller & Co** with partner Tamar Dolev-Green. Completing the partnership is criminal antitrust specialist Mazor Matzkevich, who joined the firm as a partner in 2011 after four years at Israel's

Antitrust Authority and another six at the US Federal Trade Commission.

The firm has been standing counsel to MasterCard for over 15 years, and represented the company in the now concluded interchange fee case. Toshiba is another important client – the firm acted for the technology company in the authority's gas insulated switchgear investigation, from which the company was released in September. The team also represented air cargo company Swissport in dominance proceedings by the IAA. Criminal cases are keeping the firm increasingly busy – in the past year, the firm has advised companies facing prosecution in the insurance, bakery, pruning, meteorology and water industries. It acted for Kiryat Shmona Area Bakery and its chief executive in criminal proceedings brought against an alleged bakery cartel and also successfully represented one of the defendants in the IAA's investigation of a cartel in the insurance industry.

As former director of enforcement and compliance at Israel's Antitrust Authority, *Who's Who Legal* nominee D Ziv Abramovich runs a small but effective practice at **Lapidot Melchior Abramovich & Co.** As the only competition partner, Abramovich personally oversees a busy competition workload, including both behavioural and transaction matters.

On the merger side, the firm is advising both international and domestic clients, including Cibus Business Meals in its sale to France's Sodexo group, which was cleared by the authority despite being blocked when first notified. The team also acted for Office Depot in its sale to Malka Retail Group. The behavioural side is also thriving, with the firm representing companies and their employees in two major criminal investigations in the construction and meteorology sectors. Lapidot Melchior Abramovich regularly advises Cellcom, Israel's leading cellular provider; Hogla-Kimberly, the largest Israeli non-food supplier; and Israeli Bar Association on their antitrust matters.

Who's Who Legal nominee Hagai Doron leads the practice at **S Horowitz & Co** following the retirement of partner and former co-head Asgad Stern last year. The firm boasts one of the oldest antitrust groups in Israel, established in 1959. Doron is joined in the partnership by Pnina Sheffer and Asaf Rentsler, and the team is one of Israel's larger antitrust practices.

A full-service practice, S Horowitz remains busy in both behavioural and transactional cases, and says it has welcomed a number of high-profile new clients this year, including Amazon, Ladbrokes and Samsung. On the merger front, the firm coordinated AIG's acquisition of AIG Israel from its previous local partner and represented Koch Industries in its US\$1.2 billion acquisition by Guardian Industries. Litigation cases also fill the firm's books, notably the representation of British Airways in the air cargo cartel. The firm also successfully cleared IEC – the country's dominant electricity distributor – in a refusal-to-supply case before the authority, and is acting for Nestlé in an investigation of the baby foods market.

Recommended

Herzog Fox & Neeman continues to form a forceful presence. The antitrust practice was boosted last year with the addition of Boaz Golan, who joined to head the practice following a five-year tenure as the general counsel of Israel's Antitrust Authority. Merger work remains a key area for firm. It recently advised Heinz in its US\$28 million acquisition by NDS Group and is local counsel to Access Industries Holdings, an international industrial company, in its purchase of the main holdings of business group IDB Development Corporation. In litigation, the firm acts for Israel Electric Company in a class action filed for abuse of dominance.

A relative newcomer to the area, **Meitar Liquornik Geva & Leshem Brandwein** established an antitrust practice in 2007. The practice has grown rapidly since then under the leadership of founder and *Who's Who Legal* nominee Michal Halperin, and last year saw the addition of three new associates. The firm specialises in high-tech industries and says it is particularly focused on the interface between IP law and competition and antitrust law. The firm's merger control practice is thriving, and they recently advised 3D printing company Objet in US\$3 billion acquisition of rival Stratasys and 3G and Berkshire Hathaway on its acquisition of Heinz. On the behavioural side, Meitar represented dairy company Tnuva in two criminal investigations by the IAA and nuclear energy company Areva in a cartel investigation. Halperin is also counsel to national carrier El Al in its challenge of the government's "open-sky" agreement.

FIRM	HEAD(S) OF COMPETITION	SIZE	CLIENTS
Elite			
Fischer Behar Chen Well Orion & Co	Tal Eyal-Boger, Reuven Behar, Talya Solomon	4 partners 12 associates	Google, Tnuva, ABB, Swiss International Air Lines, Boeing, Visa Cal, The First International Bank of Israel, Association of Banks in Israel, Colmobil, Bezeq
Tadmor & Co	David Tadmor, Shai Bakal	4 partners 6 associates	Apple, Silver Lake Partners, AC Nielsen, Israel Chemicals Limited, Mediterranean Nautilus, EL-AL, Siemens, Nestlé, The Azrieli Group, Azuta hospitals
Weinstock-Zecler & Co	Niv Zecler	3 partners 5 associates	Pelephone, Strauss Group, Dor-Alon Group, Angel Bakeries, Super-Pharm, McCann-Erickson, Steimatzky Israeli Dentist Association, Abbott Laboratories
Zvi Agmon Law Offices	Zvi Agmon	N/A	N/A
Highly recommended			
Epstein Chomsky Osnat & Co & Gilat Knoller & Co	Eytan Epstein, Tamar Dolev-Green	3 partners 2 associates 1 counsel	MasterCard, Johnson & Johnson, Merck, Swissport Cargo Services, Toshiba, ISS, DHL Israel, Inverness Medical, Nestlé, Aspen Pharmacare, Chevron
Gross Kleinhendler Hodak Halevy & Co	Tamar Ben-David	N/A	N/A
Lapidot Melchior Abramovich & Co	D Ziv Abramovich	1 partner 2 associates	B. Gaon Holdings, Hamashbir Group, The Israeli Bar Association, Brink's Israel, Middle East Tubes Company, Cellcom Israel, Tempo Beverages, Plassim
Ron Gazit Rotenberg & Co	N/A	N/A	N/A
S Horowitz & Co	Hagai Doron	3 partners 5 associates	Teva, IATA, British Airways/Iberia, Delta Airways, Air-France/KLM, Daimler, GE, Procter & Gamble, Microsoft, Peugeot Citroën, De Beers, General Motors
Recommended			
Herzog Fox & Neeman	Boaz Golan	1 partner 1 associate	HOT Telecommunications, NDS Group, Partner Communications Company, Israel Electric Company
Meitar Liquornik Geva Leshem Tal	Michal Halperin	2 partners 9 associates	El Al, Egged, Eli Lilly, Broadcom, Tnuva G4S, Altice Group, Applied Materials, Pfizer, Jerusalem, SunPower, Makhteshim Agan, Rolls-Royce, Fiat, GlaxoSmithKline
Yoram L Cohen Ashlagi Eshel	N/A	N/A	N/A