

# LATINLAWYER

## **BAZ/DLA Piper merges with NLD in Chile**

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By Thomas Muskett-Ford

BAZ/DLA Piper has announced plans to merge with 250-listed firm NLD Abogados in Chile later this year.

The two firms will merge on 1 April and rebrand as DLA Piper BAZ NLD. The tie-up creates a firm with more than 60 lawyers, establishing it as a mid-sized outfit by Chilean standards.

Noguera, Larraín & Dulanto, which changed its name to NLD Abogados last year, is one of Chile's newer firms. Established in 2007, it has developed an unusually broad practice offering for a 17-lawyer shop. This includes a respectable transactional offering as well as energy, labour and litigation know-how. Its antitrust and tax practices are also high quality.

Meanwhile, BAZ/DLA Piper can boast good a corporate and M&A practice, strong labour law knowledge and big-name litigation clients like Uber.

NLD's broad offering was a draw for BAZ/DLA Piper. "With this association, we will be able to provide greater depth and breadth of service to our clients doing business in Chile and abroad," says BAZ/DLA Piper partner Matías Zegers.

Meanwhile, NLD hopes to gain from BAZ/DLA Piper's international links. "The merger represents a great opportunity for NLD because it will allow us to strengthen and complement our current practice areas and to offer our current and potential clients first-level services in practically the whole world," says the firm's managing partner, Paulo Larraín.

Larraín has confirmed to Latin Lawyer that all the lawyers at NLD will be making the move.

The merger underlines DLA Piper's growing presence in the region. The international firm entered Peru last year through a cooperation agreement with Pizarro, Botto & Escobar Abogados. It has similar agreements with firms in Brazil, Colombia and Mexico. Its first merger in Chile occurred in late 2016 with Bahamondez, Alvarez & Zegers. With the exception of Brazil, all of DLA's tie-ups in Latin America are Swiss verein-style relationships.

Roger Meltzer, DLA Piper's co-chair of the Americas, says the firm has had plans to grow in Chile for some time. "When we announced our relationship with BAZ in 2016, it was with the intent to expand our capabilities in one of Latin America's largest economies through a firm with an elite reputation and history of institutional success," he says. "This merger accelerates that mission, which is part of our larger pan-hemispheric strategy, and allows us to even better accomplish our goals and serve our clients."

Like most international firms, DLA has focused its Latin American expansion strategy on the Pacific Alliance countries of Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru, along with Latin America's biggest economy, Brazil. Argentina may be the next logical step for expansion. Several international firms, including DAC Beachcroft and Kennedys have recently opened in the country and DLA has been active in Argentina's evolving project finance market. It recently helped a construction company issue the country's first project bonds for more than a quarter of a century.