

Interview with the 2024 CCBE President

PIERRE-DOMINIQUE SCHUPP

What is your professional background and what are your interests outside of your work as a lawyer?

Pierre-Dominique Schupp:

I began practising as a lawyer in 1989 after obtaining a PhD in law. I became an associate and then a partner at Rusconi & Associés and now at Allia SA. After being a member of the Disciplinary Commission of the Vaud Bar between 1998 and 2001, then a member of the Bar Council between 2001 and 2004, I was elected President of the Vaud Bar between 2008 and 2010. After sitting on its Committee for four years, I had the honour of being the President of the Swiss Bar Association from 2013 to 2015.

Wishing to step up my involvement at European level, I became a member of the Swiss delegation to the CCBE in 2016, where I worked as an expert for the CCBE Insurance Committee and the European Convention Working Group.

So for the last twenty years, I have been actively involved in lawyers' organisations in addition to my professional activities within my law firm.

On a more personal note, I am the father of three daughters and will soon be, for the first time, a grandfather. I regularly go hiking in the mountains in summer and ski touring in winter. It is true that I am afraid I might have to put my family and my sports activities somewhat on the back burner this year, but it is certainly worth it.

Why did you want to become CCBE President?

After several years of participating in CCBE activities as an expert, I wished to strengthen my commitment to this organisation, which plays a crucial role at European and international level. Over its 60 years of existence, and in view of the quality of its work, the CCBE has established itself as the official voice of the profession of lawyer in Europe and has become a key interlocutor for the European institutions.



> Pierre-Dominique Schupp officially assumed the position of CCBE President on 1 January 2024.

Furthermore, Switzerland is located at the centre of Europe and has extremely strong economic ties with the European Union. In this sense, it was only natural that it should assume, in the same way as the other States, its responsibilities within the CCBE, of which it has been a full member for some twenty years.

I also come from a country where federalism is deeply rooted, and part of Switzerland's success is based on the constant search for consensus. In this sense, my in-depth

knowledge of how my country works can be an asset when it comes to reaching agreements within the CCBE or even in discussions with the European institutions.

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What issues will the CCBE be focusing on this year?

The 2024 European elections

2024 will of course be marked by the election of the European Parliament and the new European Commission. The CCBE will launch a communication campaign, including through a manifesto, to make the voice of European lawyers heard at this strategic moment and to ensure that the EU institutions prioritise in their political agenda five essential points to ensure the foundation of a fair and efficient judicial system which respects the principles of justice, human rights and the rule of law, namely : EU legislation which respects the core values of actors in the administration of justice; adequate resources for the judicial system and an effective and well-resourced legal aid system; comprehensive training for legal professionals; proper implementation of

procedural safeguards in criminal matters; a wider understanding and recognition of the importance of an independent legal profession.

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The adoption of a European convention on the protection of the profession of lawyer

The Council of Europe's work on the Convention on the protection of lawyers is entering its final phase this year. It is essential that the profession, notably through the CCBE, ensures that the outcome of this work lives up to expectations. Once this is done, the profession should be united behind this project, which should also be disseminated to ensure rapid ratification of the Convention by as many countries

as possible. The CCBE has supported the Council of Europe's work on this issue from the outset. The CCBE is convinced that a binding legal instrument is needed to respond to the growing attacks and challenges facing the profession of lawyer, which directly jeopardise respect for the rule of law and access to justice for citizens.



> CCBE President Pierre-Dominique Schupp underlines the importance of the CCBE's work in an interview with *La Télé*, a Swiss television channel, in January 2024.

The continuing intrusion of AI into the legal world

The CCBE will remain particularly vigilant regarding the impact of AI on the profession of lawyer. One of the most high-profile pieces of European legislation at present, in which the CCBE is actively involved, is the AI Act, which is in the final stages of dialogue negotiations. The principles of the rule of law impose clear restrictions on the scope of artificial intelligence. At the same time, restrictive regulations put us at a competitive disadvantage compared to the American and Chinese technology giants. How can we pull off such a balancing act? The short answer to this question is to draw clear red lines that must not be crossed and that will ultimately serve as guidelines for the development of new technologies. At the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that AI tools are increasingly used in legal practice. The CCBE has always recognised the potential of AI systems to change the work of justice and lawyers. Following the

previous [CCBE Guide](#) on the use of AI-based tools by lawyers and law firms in the EU, we are currently working on the development of a new guide on the use of generative AI tools by lawyers such as chat GPT.

We have also identified the risks associated with AI, particularly as regards respect for fundamental rights and the proper administration of justice. This is why we have always argued that the use of AI tools in the justice system should be adapted to its specific features. We believe that fundamental rights must not be compromised. This is why we supported the initial classification of the risk as very high for judicial administration in the proposed AI Act of April 2021. In this regard, it appears that the original classification has been changed to moderate risk. This is a matter of serious concern to the CCBE.

→ Continued: "What issues will the CCBE be focusing on this year?"

The importance of legal professional privilege

We must never slacken our efforts to protect legal professional privilege, particularly in the fight against money laundering, in tax matters or in the field of state supervision. In particular, the CCBE follows developments in these areas very closely and intervenes in important cases before the European Court of Human Rights or the General Court of the European Union, in proceedings which could limit the scope of professional secrecy throughout Europe. It is important to

remember that professional secrecy is not a right or privilege for lawyers, but exclusively a fundamental and essential right of citizens which must be defended at all costs. The CCBE will continue to raise awareness of the need to protect and strengthen the lawyer-client confidentiality, including where modern technologies are being used.

Strengthening the CCBE's long-term effectiveness

Finally, on a more general level, I would like to continue the discussion that began recently on the CCBE's long-term strategy. The CCBE has been in existence for over 60 years, and has become a key interlocutor for the European institutions. But we must never rest on our laurels, and I believe it is essential for the CCBE to think critically about the way it operates. In this context, we are increasingly being asked for advice in many areas by authorities outside Europe. In order to be able to respond to these requests, we must inevitably become even

more effective. A few months ago, the CCBE Presidency began an in-depth reflection on the long-term strategy of the organisation. This year, we will be discussing these issues at regular meetings with our members in order to define a strategy with which all our member Bars can identify. ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE CCBE'S ACTIONS IN 2024, GO TO [CCBE.EU](https://www.ccbe.eu).

> From left to right: Roman Završek, 2nd Vice-President of the CCBE, Thierry Wickers, 1st Vice-President of the CCBE, Pierre-Dominique Schupp, President of the CCBE, and Alex Tallon, 3rd Vice-President of the CCBE

