Chambers
GC Influencers

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Programme
Introduction

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In-house legal departments are becoming increasingly significant within the Austrian market. The demands of driving growth in international markets encourage the steady increase in the functions required of the legal department and the emergence of new structures to facilitate successful outcomes. The general counsel and legal division general managers highlighted in this list are recognised for the contributions they have made and the examples they have set in the development of in-house legal culture.

Research Methodology: Our GC Influencers have been chosen following research among private practice lawyers and other in-house counsel. We identified the key areas in which GCs have displayed substantial influence:

- Effective management and development of an in-house team.
- Navigation of substantial business projects and strategic business change.
- Understanding the pressures faced within industry.
- Bringing diversity & inclusion and CSR to the forefront of industry.
- Ability to influence and respond to regulatory change.

Our aim is to celebrate excellence within the legal profession. Our GC Influencers have created best practice pathways endorsed by both private practice and other in-house lawyers. In spotlighting their achievements, this list encourages collaboration among the in-house legal community.
Engaging content, networking and celebration with leading General Counsel and top ranked lawyers globally.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karin Peyerl</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renata Hrnjak</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alison Lazerwitz</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Kaukal</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guido Jestädt</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roswitha Stöllner</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renate Koch-Habenbacher</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamara Christ</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucia Kautzky</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonja Muellner</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia Friebel</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerda Holzinger-Burgstaller</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gregor Gessner</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingo Steinwender</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katja Tautscher</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marc Lahusen</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marielouise Gregory</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Ranftl</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roland Schreiner</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Schobel</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marko Denadic</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonja Herzog</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Karin Peyerl serves as Global Data Protection Officer at Austria-based company Red Bull. With over 15 years of experience in the field, she is praised for her skills leading the legal department at the company, with interviewees noting that she is “particularly strong in HR and IT law.” She started her career as a trainee at the Courts of Vienna, followed by a stint at global IT giant HP as an in-house counsel and over a decade as an attorney at market-leading firm CHSH. Before joining Red Bull in May 2017, Peyerl acted as a Privacy Director at FireEye.

She is recognised for her impressive data protection and cybersecurity know-how, as well as her ability to tackle various regulatory and compliance issues within the industry.
Renata Hrnjak

General Counsel

Samsung

Samsung’s head of legal affairs in Austria, Renata Hrnjak, is highly regarded as an influential counsel for her experience and skills in compliance and data protection work, with a strong focus on managing regulatory and competition issues at the company. Hrnjak joined Samsung in 2011 after a five-year stint at the legal department of AT&S, where she gained experience in compliance and insurance law.

Graduated from the University of Vienna, she is also highlighted for her solid academic track record and regular participation in legal panels, forums and conferences.

As part of her current role, Hrnjak deals with strategic corporate transactions. An example of this includes Samsung’s partnership with TTTech, an international technology company focusing on security controls and computer networking, in which the former invested EUR75 million from the Samsung Automotive Innovation Fund.
Alison Lazerwitz currently serves as Executive VP and GC at Swarovski, having joined the company in 2011. Graduated with a JD from the University of Virginia in 1981, she started her legal career as an associate at Duane Morris in Philadelphia, prior to moving in-house. She now possesses extensive experience in different market-leading companies. Prior to joining Swarovski, she led the legal team at Sodexo from 2002 to 2011, where she managed an international team and was responsible for developing global framework agreements.

Lazerwitz's current role involves leading a global team of over 40 professionals and overseeing all legal matters spanning different areas such as IP, M&A and compliance, with a focus on dealing with merchandising agreements and product placement contracts.

She stands out not only for her experience, business acumen and technical knowledge, but also for being committed to women’s equality initiatives, speaking on conferences on the subject and has also been appointed to the Board of the European Network for Women in Leadership.
Robert Kaukal is Head of Legal Services Corporate/M&A at Raiffeisen Bank International, a position he has held since 2003. He has been with the company since 1989, building up impressive expertise dealing with complex corporate matters and regulatory issues throughout the years, also addressing compliance queries.

Kaukal has handled challenging transactions in recent times, confirming his status as a highly-influential corporate counsel, such as the award-winning merger of Raiffeisen Bank International with its unlisted parent Raiffeisen Zentralbank Österreich, which was a major corporate reorganisation within the Austrian banking sector, valued at over EUR4 billion. Additionally, and as part of this reorganisation, in October 2018 the sale of the core banking operations of Raiffeisen Bank International’s subsidiary Raiffeisen Bank Polska to BNP Paribas was closed, following regulatory approvals, for approximately EUR760 million.
Guido Jestädt acts as General Counsel at BAWAG, the Vienna-headquartered bank with subsidiaries in Germany, which he joined in 2012. He is a highly-regarded lawyer, praised for his solid academic track record, with degrees from the University of Würzburg and Oxford, and a PhD obtained from the University of Konstanz.

Since joining the company he has been involved in a wide variety of complex matters, continuing to rise in prominence as a leading in-house counsel within the banking sector. He regularly acts and supervises his team and external counsel on M&A, regulatory issues, strategic partnerships and capital markets transactions as well as disputes.

Jestädt has been very active in M&A and capital markets in past years, demonstrating his skill and technical knowledge, with BAWAG’s Group successful 2017 IPO on the Vienna Stock Exchange as a key piece of work, also worth noting his involvement in the bank’s takeover of Stuttgart-based Südwestbank.
Roswitha Stöllner, Head of Legal at Spar Group, is highlighted for her vast experience in the legal field, drawing praise from market sources for her team management skills and ability to “hold all the strings in her hands.”

She is responsible for a wide array of matters at the food retail giant, regularly working on dispute resolution, data protection and competition matters, banking and capital markets transactions, as well as regulatory proceedings, with additional expertise in employment law at a company that employs over 80,000 people in the region.

Stöllner has demonstrated her influence and skills on antitrust matters, having dealt with cartel accusations regarding price fixing with other major retailers in Austria, also active on regional corporate matters such as Spar’s expansion in Croatia, by taking over Billa from Rewe Group.
Renate Koch-Habenbacher acts as General Counsel at Raiffeisen Centrobank since 2015. Graduated in law from the University of Vienna in 2003, she also holds an LL.M from the same institution, obtained in 2012.

Koch-Habenbacher’s role includes dealing with complex corporate and regulatory issues pertaining day-to-day operations of the investment institution with activities in Austria and other European countries.

The company, a subsidiary of Raiffeisen Bank International, is known for issuing bonus and capital protection certificates as well as convertible bonds, among others, and is considered one of the market leaders in structured products.
Tamara Christ took over the role of Chief Legal Officer in December 2016, re-joining Austrian Airlines, having previously led the legal team at Eurowings for over a year. She is highlighted for her impressive expertise and vast history in the aviation industry, having started her career at Austrian Airlines in 2003 as a passenger service agent while completing her legal studies at the University of Vienna, where she later obtained a doctorate in criminal law.

During her first stint at Austrian Airlines until 2013, Christ gained experience in compliance, regulatory and corporate law, working as part of the in-house legal team on various affairs. After that, she moved on to work for its parent company Lufthansa in Germany, and later to Eurowings Europe. The latter gave her the chance to be part of the company’s strategic expansion plans, dealing with numerous regulatory and compliance issues to obtain required approvals as well as handling labour disputes over collective agreements.
Lucia Kautzky currently serves at General Counsel at Immofinanz, the commercial real estate company for retail and office space with headquarters in Vienna. She is recognised as an influential counsel for her extensive experience and involvement in high-profile corporate matters, also demonstrating her technical knowledge and commercial awareness by being a part of panel discussions at legal events and seminars.

In her role, she helps the company to achieve its day-to-day operations while investing in its growth through strategic partnerships and M&A transactions. Kautzky has overseen several matters in recent years, including capital markets work such as the reclassification of share capital through a reverse stock split. Additionally, in September 2018, Immofinanz closed the complex sale of its 26% stake in CA Immo to Starwood Capital, securing regulatory approvals, on a matter valued at EUR757.9 million.
Sonja Muellner currently serves as General Counsel at major Austrian construction company with operations worldwide Strabag, having joined the company over a decade ago.

Her work as leader of the legal department at the company, which employs over 10,000 people, involves dealing with a wide range of issues from being responsible for data protection to large transactions and construction disputes.

Some examples of Muellner’s varied work as an influential in-house lawyer include corporate disputes with minority shareholders of a German subsidiary, complaints filed with Croatian authorities over a tender regarding the construction of a bridge in the country alleging that the winning bid was lower than market price.

She also regularly handles bids and complex high-value commercial contracts in Austria and abroad, one recent highlight includes winning a contract through the company’s Polish subsidiary for the construction of a section of the A1 motorway in Poland.
Julia Friebel serves as General Counsel at OMV Group since 2011, joining the parent company after almost a decade acting as Chief Counsel at OMV Exploration & Production. She boasts an impressive track record in the energy and oil and gas sectors, with close to 30 years of experience in the field. Her previous work includes long stints at Preussag Energy and Enron, where she developed her skills as a top influential counsel, handling complex commercial and financial work.

Friebel is currently in charge of strategic decisions regarding acquisitions, negotiating high-value private and public sector contracts as well as dealing with regulatory issues.

Graduated in the ‘80s from Ruhr University Bochum, she continues to impress with her academic activities, regularly attending and speaking at conferences and panels to discuss and analyse current affairs in the energy sector.
ERSTE Group Bank’s current Head of Group Secretariat is senior expert Gerda Holzinger-Burgstaller. Her main areas of focus include overseeing the group’s complex regulatory framework, managing different projects within the company such as issues of shares, investments, acquisitions and divestitures, additionally handling matters pertaining to banking and general corporate law.

Before joining ERSTE, Holzinger-Burgstaller gained experience through stints at Schebesta & Holzinger and at the Austrian Financial Market Authority, allowing her to navigate through complex regulatory issues since early in her career.

She also demonstrates an illustrious academic track record, with a Master of Business Administration from the University of Economics and Business in Vienna, as well as a Master of Business Law obtained from that same institution.
Gregor Gessner joined GATX Rail Europe as Regional Counsel for Europe in November 2018, bringing over to his new role his almost two decades of experience in law. He is recognised as an influential legal figure, with interviewees praising his previous work as both external and internal counsel and highlighting the company’s “prominent market position in Europe.”

He started his career at Fiebinger Polak Leon in 2001 after obtaining his law degree from the University of Vienna, followed by stints at DLA Piper and Hausmaninger Kletter, where he advised international clients on commercial contracts, data protection, IP as well as labour and litigation. In 2011 he moved on to work an in-house counsel at HP, focusing on complex corporate transactions and compliance issues.

Gessner also holds an LL.M from NYU School of Law.
Ingo Steinwender is Group Head of Legal at CA Immobilien Anlagen and has been with the company since 2013. Market sources highlight him for his team-management skills and broad experience in real estate project management and development, and someone who is also well-versed in strategic investments.

His solid academic record also makes him stand out, with a degree from the University of Salzburg and a doctorate from the University of Vienna. Prior to launching his in-house legal career, Steinwender worked as a lawyer at market-leading firms in Central and Eastern Europe, such as Schoenherr and CHSH.

Since 2007 he has been working at prominent real estate companies in Austria, with stints at Eyemaxx Real Estate and IES Immobilien.

His current role involves dealing with complex contracts and projects throughout the region, one highlight being the EUR68 million acquisition of ‘Visionary,’ a Class A office building in Prague sold by Skanska. More recently, the company closed the sale of the Austria Trend Hotel in Slovenia to a joint venture between KD Sladi and Peakside Capital.
Katja Tautscher is highly-regarded for her ten-year tenure at Borealis Group, currently acting as Chief Legal and Procurement Officer. Tautscher attracts particular praise from market sources for “managing broad responsibilities,” with interviewees reporting that she is a “very capable lawyer.”

Graduated with a bachelor's degree from the University of Vienna and a master's from the London School of Economics, she also holds an Executive MBA from INSEAD. Her legal career started at Wolf Theiss, before taking up an in-house role at Scientific Games. Since 2008 she is with Borealis, acting not only on a wide range of legal issues, but also managing a large budget for procurement.

Tautscher is also a regular speaker at corporate panels and conferences, and is recognised as an influential counsel for her deft handling of all legal issues including compliance and insurance, focusing on mitigating any potential risks the company could face.
Marc Lahusen heads the Law & Compliance department at Georg Fischer and is also a member of the Board of Directors at Georg Fischer Automotive. Sources commend Lahusen for his experience and add that he is “particularly strong as a General Counsel.”

He has been active recently on several corporate matters regarding acquisitions, divestitures and restructurings. The company acquired Precicast Industrial Holding in April 2018 and divested two iron casting plants in Germany with the aim of restructuring GF Casting Solutions. In terms of strategic partnerships, another subsidiary of Georg Fischer, GF Machining Solutions, and 3D Systems from Rock Hill announced an agreement for developing integrated manufacturing solutions based on 3D printing.
Marielouise Gregory acts as General Counsel at Telekom Austria, a role she took over more than a decade ago, having been at the company’s legal team since 1996. Gregory draws praise from interviewees for her long-standing experience with the company, with sources reporting that she is a “very experienced in-house lawyer.”

She currently manages a large team of lawyers and assistants dealing with all legal matters relevant to regulations in the telecommunications industry, also active on M&A and capital markets transactions as well as day-to-day compliance, data protection and corporate governance issues.

Gregory’s solid academic record boasts an International Strategic Management Executive MBA from LIMAK.

Gregory has been part of numerous transactions and rolling-out of new technologies, and the company has recently announced that it has acquired 100-140MHz at the Austrian spectrum auction for the 3.5GHz band at EUR64.3 million, which will be used to launch its 5G network.
Robert Ranftler

Co-Head Legal
RHI Magnesita

Market sources single out Robert Ranftler for his role as Head of Legal and Compliance at RHI Magnesita, with interviewees highlighting the company as a “truly global player.”

His career as in-house legal counsel started almost 20 years ago at Brain Force Software in Vienna, later joining RHI’s legal department in 2002. He is well-versed in corporate law, focusing on international business matters and industrial law issues.

Ranftler’s role as legal lead includes acting on M&A, strategic investments, restructuring and project management. Work in past years saw him overseeing the merger of Brazilian company Magnesita Refratorios with RHI, on a matter valued at EUR118 million which required several competition authorities’ approvals. More recently, he acted on the sale of two Dolomite stone factories in Italy and Spain to Intocast.
Roland Schreiner is Associate Group General Counsel and Head of Legal Operations at Atos, where he joined in 2011. Schreiner is an influential counsel who describes his role as “challenging, very interesting and of course, very rewarding,” and highlights the importance of the topic of digitalisation, working on initiatives to promote it and has been responsible for building a global compliance management system for the company. As part of his transactional work, he acted on the acquisition of Convergence Creators a Siemens’ subsidiary.

Prior to joining Atos, he was with Siemens for over 15 years, starting as part of the in-house team, working his way up to Head of Legal and Compliance.

Schreiner graduated from the University of Vienna, and also holds an LL.M from the University of Notre Dame and a Global Executive MBA from the University of Minnesota, obtained in 2015.
Thomas Schobel is General Counsel for Austria and the CEE at Siemens, leading a team of more than 60 lawyers and contract managers. Interviewees highlight Schobel as a “leading General Counsel in Austria” and commend his broad knowledge and impressive academic record, as he holds an LL.M from Harvard University besides his degree from the University of Vienna.

He has vast experience both as in-house and external counsel, having worked at leading international firms such as Sullivan & Cromwell in New York and Freshfields in Vienna, before transferring in-house to lead the legal department at Hypo Group Alpe Adria. During his time at the banking group, he acted on its restructuring following its nationalisation.

At Siemens, Schobel deals with all legal issues in Austria and the rest of Europe for all sectors the company works in, including M&A and other projects.
Marko Denadic

Director International Legal
Strabag

Director of International Legal at Strabag Marko Denadic has significant experience in the construction and logistics industries and has been with the company in legal roles for almost a decade, demonstrating his skill and capabilities in the field of international commercial law for large construction projects.

After graduating from the University of Vienna, he joined Wolf Theiss as a trainee, later moving in-house to OMV, advising the company on several M&A, projects and commercial contracts relating to LNG.

At Strabag, Denadic deals with legal issues relating to several international projects, counseling the group on commercial construction law and related disputes including international arbitration. He is also highlighted for his experience in corporate, compliance and project finance.
Sonja Herzog leads the legal team at research center Silicon Austria Labs since early 2018. Graduated from the University of Vienna in 2019 and with experience in private practice at Eisenberger & Herzog, since 2009 she has been in-house counsel, with stints at XXXLutz and ams AG.

Herzog is well-versed in IP law, helping the company protect it copyright and patent, also focusing on regulatory issues and general commercial matters. She is a regular speaker at conferences, with a special interesting in legal innovation regarding IP rights, and has led a talk at Forum Invent in November 2018.

She has been very active in the corporate field as well, launching in January 2019 SAL’s first cooperation agreement, a project with ams AG carried out with the Institute of Electronics of Graz University of Technology. In March 2019, a share transfer from Carinthian Tech Research to SAL took place, as a step into the merger of both institutions in order to combine strengths into research capabilities.