

Brussels Isn't a Trophy, It's a Tool: How We Build Bridges Between the Region and the EU in a Year of Big Changes

This year we established a permanent presence in the heart of European Union decision-making and, as far as I know, became the only independent law firm east of Germany—from CEE and the Balkans—with a permanent platform of that level in Brussels, says Bogdan Gecić in an interview for Nedeljnik.

In the year behind us, Gecić Law won the title Law Firm of the Year: South Eastern Europe at The Lawyer European Awards for the third time, alongside eight consecutive years as a finalist, in a category that covers a market of over 150 million people—from Turkey to the Balkans.

At the same time, the firm opened a permanent presence in Brussels, positioning itself as the only independent law firm east of Germany, from CEE and the Balkans, with such a platform at the heart of EU decision-making.

Bogdan Gecić speaks about trust, responsible corporate governance, the speed of change (AI), and what the region can do to play by its best rules in Europe.

Last year was marked by significant recognition in London. What does it mean to “win the Oscars” in law in 2025?

If I may say so, I don't see these awards as medals for a display case.

They are a signal. A signal that what you do in Belgrade, Podgorica, Sarajevo, or Brussels can pass the strictest European and global scrutiny, by the criteria of innovation, strategic clarity, operational excellence, and cross-border capability.

The second important thing is the category itself. It covers a market of more than 150 million people, including Turkey and the entire arc from Slovenia to Greece.

In such an environment, the fact that we won the title for the third time, and that we have been a finalist for eight years in a row, is more a story about continuity than about “one good year.”

At the same time, you opened an office in Brussels. Why was that necessary—and why now?

Brussels is not a prestigious address. Brussels is infrastructure.

If you work with EU law, competition, trade, state aid, energy mechanisms, CBAM, or AI regulation, you cannot be merely “an observer from a distance.” You have to be close to the process, the language, and the dynamics of the institutions.

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That matters both for clients and for the region, because a great deal of what will define the economy here over the next ten years is already being written there.

How tangible is that “fast European change” today in Serbia and the Balkans? Does the regional public even feel those changes?

They feel these changes more than they think—they, however, often realize too late what caused them. CBAM is a good example: it is a regulatory mechanism that could dramatically change the cost structure and the competitive position of exporters in the real economy, because from 2026, the European Union is introducing a levy on the imports of certain carbon-intensive products, such as iron and steel, cement, fertilizers, aluminum, electricity, and hydrogen. That is why we organized the first regional CBAM conference in Belgrade—to discuss it in advance, in dialogue with businesses and institutions, rather than afterward, when the damage has already been done.

It is similar with AI. Many still believe this is a topic suitable for IT conferences, but in fact, it is a matter for boards of directors, a compliance and responsibility issue, a topic relevant to consumers, and one that falls under labor law. In 2023, we launched a dedicated AI and robotics practice, becoming the first independent firm in the Western Balkans region to do so. This move was made precisely because we anticipated that the “rules of the game” would arrive faster than the market had hoped.

There is often talk about a “crisis of trust.” You often mention integrity and governance. What does that look like in practice?

Trust is a measurable category, even though people tend to romanticize it.



In practice, trust means: clear accountability, good internal controls, transparent decision-making, and a culture in which “no” can be said in time. It is interesting to me that even at regional conferences we increasingly return to corporate governance as the foundation of system resilience. When systems break, it usually happens where governance is weak, where controls are merely formal, and where ethics and integrity remain at the level of a PowerPoint presentation.

Your name sometimes appears in politically sensitive news—in the context of the role of lawyers in large systems. How do you view the public perception of the legal profession?

Corporate law is by definition where tension is highest: high stakes, complex regulation, a plurality of interests, and often strong public emotions. That is why I believe lawyers have to be doubly disciplined. First, toward the rules of the profession—on conflicts of interest, confidentiality, and process—and then toward their own integrity, ethics, and clearly set boundaries. The public, of course, has the right to ask questions. But we have the obligation to work professionally, even when it is uncomfortable and when the topic is polarizing.

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The legal profession is one of the basic and indispensable pillars of the rule of law and the right to an effective defense for everyone—regardless of whether we like the person or agree with them.

2025 also brought increased international engagement—TerraLex, Vice President of HLSAE, and transatlantic initiatives... What is the strategic logic behind that?

Memberships in international organizations are not just another “badge.” They can bring real operational and qualitative advantages. TerraLex is an organization that covers more than 200 jurisdictions in over 120 countries, with clear, high standards of cooperation.

Within that framework, the firm becomes a platform: the client does not receive only local advice, but coordination and the ability to obtain advice in multiple countries, in real time.

This year I also had the honor, at the assembly of the Harvard Law Association of Europe in Vilnius, to be the first person from the broader region elected vice-president of this prestigious international organization.

Transatlantic themes are once again crucial today—not only politically but also economically: investments, technology, regulation. At an Atlantic Council forum in Washington, I spoke about the fact that the region can be faster, more agile, and more open to experimentation than many more mature jurisdictions—if it sets the framework smartly.

AI is everywhere. How do you avoid two extremes—panic and naïve euphoria?

By bringing it down to earth. AI is a powerful tool, but it also entails risk and responsibility.

The idea of the “right speed” is especially important to me: not to regulate too early or too heavily, but also not to improvise once it is already too late.

In 2025, I was selected for the global AI initiative, the Perplexity AI Business Fellowship, where among only a thousand participants lawyers are in the minority, and there are very few representatives from the region. I see that as another confirmation that the legal profession is changing and that we must be proactive, not reactive.

When you say “proactive,” what is your focus for 2026?

Three things. First: developments in international trade will be very significant—meaning everything we do needs to be creative and designed to help Serbian and regional business be as competitive as possible in a very complex international environment.

Second: governance—so that legal advice is connected to corporate governance, risks, and internal controls, whether we are talking about sanctions, tariffs, or new duties tied to greenhouse gas emissions.

Third: AI with meaning—not AI as marketing, but as a discipline that improves quality, speed, and consistency of service, with clear human accountability.

If we do that, I believe the region will not be Europe's periphery, but its laboratory of practical solutions.



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