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Before establishing law firm HKV, Martin worked as a senior associate for White & Case in Bratislava and Prague. He obtained extensive experience in the areas of real estate, M&A, corporate, employment, and foreign direct investment by participating in many large-scale privatizations, real estate and corporate acquisitions as well as commercial transactions. Martin's practice focuses primarily on buy- and sell-side mergers and acquisitions, private equity transactions, joint ventures, general corporate matters including corporate governance matters and employment law.

## **IN THE CURRENT GEOPOLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CLIMATE, WHAT SHOULD SLOVAKIA PRIORITIZE TO REMAIN COMPETITIVE WITHIN THE EU AND GLOBALLY?**

We need to stop pretending we can compete on cheap labour as that race is over. The priorities are obvious: a legal, tax and regulatory framework that does not change every six months, real investment in infrastructure (especially east-west), and an education system that actually talks to industry. And, honestly, political stability. Investors don't start by reading our laws; they read our headlines.

## **DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IS RESHAPING LABOR MARKETS ACROSS EUROPE. HOW SHOULD SLOVAKIA RESPOND TO AGING, TALENT SHORTAGES, AND WORKFORCE TRANSFORMATION?**

Realistically, we won't out-birth this problem. We need to keep our young people here which means housing, decent salaries, and a reason to stay. Also we need a serious, controlled immigration policy targeted at skills we lack. Pretending the demographic curve will fix itself is the most expensive policy we have.

## **IF YOU COULD DEFINE ONE BOLD REFORM OR STRATEGIC SHIFT THAT WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT IN SLOVAKIA, WHAT WOULD IT BE?**

Radically digitise and simplify how the state interacts with business. One tax, one form, one portal, and one coordinated inspection per topic per year instead of overlapping checks from several authorities at the same time. Slovak entrepreneurs spend an embarrassing amount of time on compliance theatre that produces nothing. Cut that in half, and you will see investment, hiring and tax revenue all move in the right direction.

## **WHAT ACHIEVEMENT FROM 2025 ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF, AND WHY?**

Two stand out. The first is advising the buyer on the acquisition of MEDIREX GROUP (the Slovak leader in laboratory diagnostics) obtaining sole control from the former joint-venture partner, one of Europe's largest laboratory operators. Structurally, it was one of the most demanding mandates we have handled: a Slovak acquisition combined with a parallel cross-border component in the Czech Republic, the unwinding of a long-standing joint venture, two separate acquisition financing lines from different banks, and Slovak merger control clearance. Healthcare, cross-border, financed and regulated — every layer at once.

The second is the Slovak Bridge Reconstruction project, to be realised as a PPP. Roughly a third of our 1,800

state-owned bridges are in poor or critical condition, and without action up to 90% could deteriorate by 2035. We are part of the consortium acting as legal advisor to the Ministry of Transport on what will be one of the first PPP projects of its kind in Europe focused on the systematic renewal of a national bridge stock. What I am most proud of is not the size of the project; it is the fact that we are effectively drafting the template for a model that has not been realised in this form before. And once it works here, it can be replicated elsewhere.

## **WHAT IS THE BIGGEST STRATEGIC CHALLENGE YOUR COMPANY IS CURRENTLY NAVIGATING?**

Our biggest strategic challenge is the arrival of AI and how to use it properly in the legal industry, without losing quality, confidentiality and personal responsibility. Navigating that shift without compromising quality, confidentiality, or the next generation of lawyers is the defining challenge for HKV and for the profession. Also we have to rethink how junior lawyers learn, because AI is absorbing the first-pass work that used to be their training ground.

## **HOW IS AI OR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION CHANGING YOUR INDUSTRY, AND HOW ARE YOU RESPONDING?**

AI is fundamentally changing legal services. Research, document review and first drafts that used to take days now take minutes, which means the billable hour is losing its meaning as a measure of value. Pricing will shift towards outcomes, fixed fees and risk-sharing. Routine work will commoditise; the real value will sit in judgment, strategy and accountability which are things a client cannot outsource to an AI model. Smaller, sharper teams will outperform large ones built on leverage. We are responding by integrating AI where it brings genuine efficiency, but always with human control, strict confidentiality, and the final legal responsibility on our side. The lawyers will divide into those who adapt and those who do not.

## **WHAT LEADERSHIP QUALITY DO YOU BELIEVE IS MOST ESSENTIAL IN TODAY'S COMPLEX ENVIRONMENT**

Clarity and trust. In a noisy, uncertain environment, people need to know what we're doing, why, and what's expected of them. Charisma fades, strategies change, technology shifts but a leader who can take a complicated situation, make it clear, take a position, and move forward is worth a lot. Also a good leader should not pretend to know everything, but should be able to take responsibility and give direction. For clients and for colleagues alike, trust is still the most important currency.