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Hunton Snags Competition Pro From Linklaters

By **Leigh Kamping-Carder**

Law360, New York (July 01, 2009) -- As part of a strategy to expand its presence in the European market, Hunton & Williams LLP has added a new partner to its global competition practice who joins the firm's Brussels office from Linklaters LLP.

Paul E. McGeown started at the firm on Wednesday. Although the bulk of his competition work will take place in Brussels, he will also be active in Hunton & Williams' U.K. competition practice.

"One of the challenges I've been set is to help to develop our market visibility and our presence in the U.K.," he said.

To bolster its European presence, the firm plans to take on locally qualified attorneys in France, Germany, the U.K. and possibly Italy and Spain, McGeown said.

"You need to be in the big markets ... especially if you have U.S. clients," he said.

McGeown's move to Hunton & Williams is the result of a relationship at least a year in the making.

The solicitor first encountered attorneys at the firm when Dr. Michael Rosenthal, Brussels office managing partner and European competition practice chair, approached him for advice on the European aspects of the merger between Delta Air Lines Inc. and Northwest Airlines.

R. Hewitt Pate, head of Hunton & Williams' global competition practice, pointed to McGeown's U.K. background and experience with the aviation industry as a "perfect fit" for the firm's plans to expand in Europe.

McGeown's practice is principally transactional, with a focus on mergers and acquisitions and state aid, the body of European law that regulates government subsidies.

For a number of years, McGeown has advised Air France-KLM on the EU-related aspects of the company's recent acquisitions.

His clients have included eight members of the SkyTeam Alliance, one of the three global alliances of airline carriers, which he has counseled in connection with an ongoing European Commission investigation. McGeown has been active in the EC's antitrust inquiry since it began in 2004.

Other major cases include advising a commodities and raw materials supplier on a three-way merger of its aluminum business and the reorganization of its oil and gas business; counseling a French-registered bank regarding a joint venture derivatives brokerage; and helping a privatizing European airline on filing a state aid complaint.

“Adding Paul to our competition practice in the Brussels office is an important development toward providing clients European competition representation at both EU and national levels in key jurisdictions,” said Rosenthal.

McGeown joined Linklaters in 2001 as a solicitor and was made a partner in 2004. He has worked as in-house global competition counsel at Alstom, a transport and energy infrastructure company, in Paris. A solicitor position at Slaughter & May first brought him to Brussels in 1995.

Two years later he moved to Paris and has remained a resident of those cities ever since.

Although McGeown expressed fondness for his former firm, he said that in the current climate he was looking for a new environment and new opportunities.

With 1,000 attorneys, Hunton & Williams operates in 100 countries around the world. The firm was established in 1901.