



## Von Wobeser y Sierra

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Mexico's leading arbitration firm added an ex-ICC deputy counsel to the team.

The Latin Lawyer 250, the definitive guide to law firms in Latin America, singles out Von Wobeser y Sierra's arbitration practice as one of the best options in Mexico – thanks largely, it says, to the impressive international profile of the firm's founder, Claus Von Wobeser.

It's hard to disagree. On top of multiple bar association roles, Von Wobeser is a vice president of the ICC Court and also regular arbitrator in commercial and investor-state disputes. He is currently sitting on ICSID panels hearing claims against Guatemala, Peru, Poland, Uzbekistan and Venezuela; as well as on an ad hoc committee considering Ukraine's application to annul an award in favour of a US radio investor.

As for his counsel work, he and partner Marco Tulio Venegas represented brewer Anheuser-Busch InBev (working with Skadden Arps and Sullivan & Cromwell) in a substantial claim brought by Mexico's Grupo Modelo.

Construction companies – including market leader ICA and former Halliburton subsidiary KRB – are regular clients, and the firm also represents businesses in negotiations with state oil company Pemex or electricity utility CFE.

Over the years, the team has grown from around six members to nearer 15. Many have appeared now as expert witnesses on Mexican law for international firms.

### Track record

Anheuser-Busch won the arbitration with Grupo Modelo – prompting the boss to take the team on a night out. "When I received the award, I was compelled to find the arbitration team and celebrate," Von Wobeser says.

In another recent case – for a chemicals company in ICC proceedings brought by a competitor over an alleged breach of a purchase agreement – the team won its client full costs (in that, Hunton & Williams was co-counsel) after the tribunal dismissed the claim.

Meanwhile, associate Montserrat Manzano was part of a precedent-setting decision clarifying the extent of the Mexican courts' ability to refuse enforcement of awards on the grounds of due process violations.

### Recent events

In September 2011, Von Wobeser was among 10 individuals newly designated to ICSID's panel of arbitrators by the chair of the centre's administrative council. Although he had previously sat on ICSID panels, it means he is now eligible for default appointments (where the parties can't agree on an arbitrator) and for appointments to annulment committees.

He had a number of new arbitral appointments in 2011 – including replacing Costa Rica's Rodrigo Oreamuno on the TECO v Guatemala panel at ICISD following the latter's resignation.

The firm welcomed new associate Victor Ruiz, a Mexican national who's spent the past three years as a deputy counsel in the ICC's Latin American group, working for the most part with managing counsel (now deputy secretary general) José Ricardo Feris.

Von Wobeser y Sierra is also defending ICA in a domestic arbitration brought by Spanish real estate investor Grupo Mall. The dispute, which concerns a tourist resort in the Yucatán peninsula, has also raised the prospect of a billion-dollar ICSID claim by Mall against the Mexican government.



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Offering excellence and integrity, Von Wobeser y Sierra is a full service law firm founded in 1986. In the arbitration field, law firm ranking agencies confirm that **Wobeser y Sierra, S.C. (VWYS)** is the leading firm for dispute resolution services in Mexico and one of the most prominent in the field in the Latin American region. VWYS is the only firm in Mexico ranked by Global Arbitration Review among the best 100 law firms worldwide and Chambers & Partners has ranked its dispute resolution team in the top tier.

The dispute resolution practice of VWYS is domestic and international, and its clients include many Fortune 500 companies. Over the past 25 years, the firm has successfully represented several companies and foreign governments in a wide variety of disputes of different sizes and complexities, ranging from a fully successful defense of a 2.5 billion dollar commercial arbitration claim between two shareholders of a beer company, to a 130 million dollar judicial claim involving the malfunctioning of a satellite in outer space, just to mention some representative examples.

The dispute resolution practice group of the firm is co-headed by Claus von Wobeser and Marco Tulio Venegas, who lead a team of 15 attorneys, all graduates with honors from the top law schools in Mexico, U.S. and Europe, and many of them trained in New York, Washington D.C. The level of sophistication of this practice group is unparalleled in Mexico and highly competitive worldwide.

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