



# LEGAL KNOWLEDGE PORTAL GLOBAL LEGAL KNOWLEDGE WITHIN YOUR REACH

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What's the situation with your Germany-based staff's pensions, your product's trademark rights in the Netherlands, or your transport contracts in China? Anyone who does business abroad will soon find that legislation there is very different from U.S. legislation. Every country has its own national rules. But how do you stay informed? If you have any legal questions about international

affairs, go to the unique site for entrepreneurs: [www.legalknowledgeportal.com](http://www.legalknowledgeportal.com).

The Legal Knowledge Portal is an online source of knowledge that is specifically intended for business leaders and entrepreneurs who do business internationally. Thanks to close collaboration between USLAW and its European counterpart TELFA (see text box), the knowledge portal

has grown into a unique global knowledge portal that helps business leaders navigate international law.

## NEW MATERIAL EVERY DAY

More than 30 European law firms have committed to the site since its launch in January 2012, and they regularly post topical legal articles. Subjects covered range from

Maltese maritime law to price cuts in Turkey's pharmaceutical industry. In turn, increasing numbers of USLAW firms are also active on the site, answering questions of European entrepreneurs about U.S. legislation. Other countries have meanwhile also joined this initiative, with legal professionals from reputable firms in Argentina, Brazil, Russia, India, and China publishing articles on the knowledge portal. These new additions have brought unprecedented growth in the daily publication of new material with no signs of slowing down. Reliability of both content and authors is guaranteed, as all participating firms are affiliated with the TELFA or USLAW NETWORK.

### MEETING A NEED

The international knowledge portal is an initiative by the Netherlands-based firm and TELFA member Dirkzwager advocaten & notarissen, which also takes care of administration of the website. Domestically, Dirkzwager has been successfully sharing legal knowledge through its own knowledge websites and social media for some time now. In 2011, their efforts earned the firm the Dutch award for the 'Best and Most Innovating Knowledge Sharer' among Dutch law firms.

Marcel Hielkema, Dirkzwager's Managing Director: "We noticed that visitors to partnerinkennis.nl, our Dutch-language knowledge portal, needed legal information relating to other countries where they do business. This prompted us to ask our partners across Europe and the U.S. to also post these kinds of articles."

### NEW CONTENT

Initially, other law firms were slightly uncomfortable with sharing their knowledge online. But there is a real upside to taking part in this initiative: it generates publicity. Dirkzwager helps participating firms with site-related marketing and advertising, raising the site's profile in the various countries. This leads to a major influx of visitors to the site, more or less forcing participating firms to continuously post new articles. This guarantees regular publication of new content. Visitors from 158 countries have meanwhile already found their way to the website. Although site administrators do not edit the contents of the articles, because after all the authors are specialists, articles are search engine optimized and appropriately tagged and enriched with visual material.

### UNDERSTANDING CROSS-BORDER LEGAL DIFFERENCES

Articles posted on the Legal Knowledge Portal deal with legal activities

and legislative amendments that affect international trade, providing important cross-border information that never used to be this easily accessible online, but which attorneys, business leaders and entrepreneurs need to know.

Hielkema reiterates that legislation differs greatly across the various nations of Europe. "The basic premise of employment law in Europe, for example, is very different from U.S. employment law. The separate U.S. states still have to comply with national laws. In Europe, each country has its own national legislation – except for in the area of antitrust law. Dutch employment termination law, for example, differs greatly from Italian legislation governing employment termination. Lack of insight into these differences will make doing business across borders very difficult."

### COLLABORATION, DIRECT ACCESS KNOWLEDGE SHARING

The basic idea behind the legal knowledge portal is to facilitate knowledge sharing. Because a well-informed business leader, entrepreneur or organization will be in a better position and be able to put more targeted questions to legal professionals.

Hielkema: "In many cases, lawyers are only consulted when companies stumble on problems. If an entrepreneur were to be able to better assess the situation using appropriate legal knowledge, these problems could be avoided. Entrepreneurs are already increasingly taking to Google before calling a legal professional. And their in-house legal counsel simply cannot stay on top of all international legislative issues. On the Legal Knowledge Portal, visitors can find up-to-date legal information about European and other countries, written in plain English. Where else will you find up-to-date information about China in English?"

Visitors to the site can search by country or subject. A particularly unique feature of the site is that users can subsequently contact the author of an article by e-mail or phone. Hielkema: "This gives entrepreneurs direct access to a huge network of dependable law firms across Europe and further afield through the site. Because users should be mindful of the fact that the website is not a substitute for a specialist legal advisor."

The Legal Knowledge Portal will soon also be available as an app for iPhone and iPad. If you are an entrepreneur and you do business internationally, make sure you don't miss out on all that practical information. Bookmark [www.legalknowledgeportal.com](http://www.legalknowledgeportal.com) today.

*The Trans European Law Firms Alliance (TELFA) is an international alliance of law firms from across Europe. So far, firms from 30 countries have joined this alliance. In anticipation of clients' growing demand for legal counsel outside Europe, TELFA is striking up partnerships with firms in other countries. TELFA has close ties with USLAW. For more information: [www.telfa.org](http://www.telfa.org)*



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