

# **E**uropean Lawyers Search for **Common Approach**

Now that the debate concerning the right of lawyers to practise permanently in other European countries has been settled, attention has been turned to creating a world-wide regime which would enable lawyers qualified in any one country to open an office anywhere in the world.

Attention is being focused because of the on-going negotiations within the framework of the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) which is being administered by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and which is intended to be used as a tool to liberalise on a world-wide basis international trade in services, including trade in legal

services. It is generally recognised that there are currently many real barriers to international trade which need to be dismantled. It is for this purpose that the WTO has set up a Working Party on Professional Services (WPPS). The WPPS is currently looking at the liberalisation of accountants' services but it is clear that the WPPS will also shortly be looking at the liberalisation of the trade in legal services.

With this in mind, the Council of Bars and Law Societies of the EC (CCBE), which represents the Bars and Law Societies of 17 countries, is attempting to get its members to agree on a common policy towards world-wide establishment.

This is proving difficult to obtain with the CCBE split between those (including the Law Societies) who favour allowing foreign lawyers to practise under their home title anywhere in the world and those who favour restricting access to those foreign lawyers who requalify in the country of destination. A united European front would obviously strengthen the CCBE's negotiating position.

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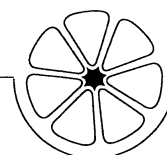
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18 SMITH STREET, GPO BOX 1999, DARWIN, NORTHERN TERRITORY 0801



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