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To Russia With Love: Region's Lawyers Share Optimistic Outlook

Richard Lloyd
The American Lawyer
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Svyato-Alexandriysky Cathedral, Rostov-on-Don, Russia

There's a palpable sense of pride among the lawyers from Russia and other former Soviet republics now gathered at the third [CIS Local Counsel Forum](#) in St. Petersburg, Russia. Not only has the region achieved remarkable economic growth but the Russian soccer team has made it to the semifinals of the European Championships. "Today, Russia can say that it has one of the leading football teams in the world to go with one of the fastest-growing economies," said Irina Paliashvili from Ukrainian firm RULG-Ukrainian Legal Group.

And now it's time for the region's law firms to have their turn in the sun. That was the message of the opening remarks from Dimitry Afanasiev, name partner and chairman of host firm Egorov, Puginsky, Afanasiev & Partners. Afanasiev said the conference should focus on pinpointing what he described as the "recipe for the successful independent or national firm in Russia or any other former Soviet Republic." He praised the contributions of the U.S. legal market in training CIS lawyers -- Afanasiev himself practiced in Philadelphia as a young attorney -- but insisted that it was now time for the local firms to stand on their own two feet. "We have come of age," he asserted.

Afanasiev congratulated the organizers of the conference for building links between law firms in the former Soviet republics. "Now, more than 15 years since the collapse of the USSR, we're talking to each other again," he said. It's imperative, he went on, that the Russian legal community mirror the success of Russian companies and play its own role on the international stage.

"Why should a deal between a company from Tajikistan and one from Azerbaijan be conducted under English law?" he asked. Some 200 lawyers from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS -- the countries of the former Soviet Union), Europe and the United States are attending the forum, including attorneys from Linklaters, Spain's Uriá Menéndez, Germany's Hengeler Mueller and Russia's ALRUD and Pepeliaev, Goltsblat & Partners. On the agenda for tonight: cheering for Russia in the televised Russia versus Spain soccer match in the conference hall.

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Since it was founded in the early 18th century by the Russian czar Peter the Great, St. Petersburg has always had a distinctly international outlook. This week it will see an influx of international and local lawyers in town for the third [CIS Local Counsel Forum](#). From the booming oil markets of Russia and central Asia to the fast-growing international business community in Ukraine, the conference will cover some of the world's most rapidly developing economies and legal markets.

Organized by RULG-Ukrainian Legal Group and hosted by Russia's [Egorov, Puginsky, Afanasiev & Partners](#) -- the firm was the subject of a [Focus Europe profile last December](#) -- the forum brings together lawyers from local and international firms in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan and beyond.

Egorov Puginsky has become one of a small brood of independent Russian firms with some clout in the Russian market, a standard-bearer alongside Moscow boutiques [Pepeliaev, Goltsblat & Partners](#); Liniya Prava; and Andrey Gorodissky & Partners. As such, the firm is becoming an increasingly prominent fixture on Russia's legal scene.

On Thursday the keynote address will be delivered by the head of Russia's Federal Antimonopoly Service, who should provide insight into Russia's embryonic antitrust laws. The Am Law Daily will be blogging from the event, so check back regularly in the coming days for more on the leading business lawyers in the region.

This article first appeared on [The Am Law Daily](#) blog on [AmericanLawyer.com](#).



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