

# Globalaw SPOTLIGHT

## EMD, Malta



Globalaw is kicking off its member spotlight series as part of its 30th Anniversary celebration. The first member firm, EMD, is from Malta. Recently, I had the pleasure of catching up with EMD's Pierre Mifsud and Lisa Vassallo. From the beginning, you could tell that EMD is a special place, with the kind of lawyers with whom we would all like to work. These are problem solvers with a commitment to relationships, diversity, history and creativity.

**Located just to its south, EMD has particularly strong ties with Libya, serving as Globalaw's representative office in that location and providing services to clients in Libya as well as inbound to Malta.**

As Lisa started talking, I could see the beautiful white tiled vault structure of their offices behind her - an office built into a historical building and located in Valletta, both the capital and one of the historical centres. And Lisa's first words were about the clients who had just left - headed to a nearby restaurant to celebrate the successful conclusion of the project with which EMD was helping. EMD's pride in the relationships they build with clients was quickly apparent, as Lisa apologised for being a few minutes late as she'd had to beg off repeated lunch invitations and lots of hugs from that client to be able to make our meeting. The importance to EMD in their relationships with clients - their partnerships with those clients- as she spoke was striking.







That focus on relationships goes beyond clients. EMD employs lawyers and staff from around the world and celebrates that diversity routinely. Whether it is through various lunches, where employees cook food to share from their native countries, or planned social events, the group is clearly based on relationships - relationships which allow firm members to work strategically across teams and provide the type of integration that makes legal advice seamless. EMD's substantive prowess is equally impressive. A recent example? Setting up a Ritz Carlton cruise line from scratch. Essentially, EMD has helped launch this entire operation: establishing physical offices for infrastructure support, financing and registering the vessels, corporate advice and assistance, contract drafting, as well as the development of key employment strategies, including work and residential permits. It is a multi-phased project; the first ship sailed last summer, with the next set to deliver in June of 2024 and with more ships to follow.

**It is exactly the kind of project that shows the depth and breadth of EMD's lawyers and their ability to work so seamlessly between their varied teams.**

And they do so not just in Malta. Given Malta's strategic location between Africa and Europe, it should come as no surprise that EMD's lawyers have strong ties in both locations. Recognized by many as an ideal entry point to the European Union, companies from Africa and the Americas find strategic value in locating here. And the opposite is equally true, with EU firms using Malta to be closer to North Africa. EMD is well positioned to assist these companies as they use Malta's strategic location to better connect with both jurisdictions.

While I'm on the call, I'm already considering when I could visit - both to see this incredible island and its history but also to connect with EMD. But Malta is much more than a tourist destination. Malta has a strong local industry, with a particular focus on financial services, shipping, aircraft maintenance, aircraft registration and pharma manufacturing. I asked Pierre, one of the founding members of the firm (which will celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2025), why pharma? He explained that the major drug companies, when registering their patents, often skipped Malta as "unimportant." But what that meant is that Malta became quite significant - essentially the land of opportunities for the generic drug companies to come in, stockpile and manufacture. It became a key entry point to the rest of the world for pharma manufacturing and underscores how a small jurisdiction can become a critical opportunity.

As we neared the end of our time, I asked Pierre if he had any last words of advice for the business person who had not worked in Malta recently. Pierre quickly responded, tying together both the legal and practical advice for which EMD is recognised, and pointing to Malta's increased focus on the substance of companies trying to claim Malta as their home. With tax, anti-money laundering, and increased expectations of actual substantial involvement, things like physical presence, employees, and local board involvement have become increasingly important. And EMD can help sort through all of those issues.

In fact, EMD's creativity has gone beyond just legal services in supporting its clients. It formed a technology company to assist with the implementation, configuration, and maintenance of enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems. The company also developed its own software suite dealing with payroll and procurement, particularly for Libya (including the deductions and taxes that are required there).

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