

Rising Stars: King & Spalding's Marie-Sophie Dibling

By Nicole Rosenthal

Law360 (June 7, 2022, 2:02 PM EDT) -- King & Spalding's Marie-Sophie Dibling served as lead counsel for the European Biodiesel Board in an anti-subsidy case helping to secure the imposition of high anti-subsidy duties, and represented the Moroccan textile industry in successful anti-dumping litigation against machine-made imports from Egypt, Jordan and China, earning her a spot among the international trade attorneys under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

THE BIGGEST CASE OF HER CAREER:

Dibling has been representing the European Biodiesel Board in its anti-subsidy complaint for more than a decade — first under Gide Loyrette Nouel in 2010 and under King & Spalding since 2019 — targeting unfairly traded imports of Indonesian biodiesel. She successfully fought for the imposition of high anti-subsidy duties in a rare instance of the European Commission tackling export restraints as countervailable subsidies.

The case is ongoing as anti-subsidy measures are being challenged before the EU General Court, with Dibling representing the EBB as an intervenor in support of the EC. The value of Indonesian biodiesel imports into the EU amounted to 515 million euros, she said.

"I call it the 'Biodiesel Saga' because it started when I joined in 2010, and I'm still working on this case right now," Dibling said. "It's renewable energy, so it's very important for the future. And due to the aggressive practices from Indonesian exporters, the short-term viability of the European industry was at stake, and so we finally imposed duties in 2012 to stop these unfair trades. But the saga continues because they have attacked the measures that are before the European Court, and the cases are still pending."

HER OTHER NOTABLE PROJECTS:

After serving as a trainee lawyer at Euroclear, Shearman & Sterling LLP and the World Trade Organization, Dibling began her practice as a trade lawyer at French international law firm Gide Loyrette in 2010. But after noticing a lack of expertise in international trade law in Morocco,



Marie-Sophie Dibling
King & Spalding

Age: 38
Home base: Brussels
Position: Partner, International Trade
Law school: Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne
First job after law school: Trainee lawyer at the World Trade Organization

she made the ambitious move to open her own practice in Casablanca at 33 years old.

Fighting to even the playing field in the international trade arena, Dibling assisted manufacturers in trade remedy investigations, and gave advice on matters such as market access and free trade agreements. Her work with the Moroccan textile industry, the largest industrial employer in Morocco, led the nation to renegotiate the free trade agreement with Turkey to rebalance its interests. In 2021, Dibling represented the Moroccan Association of Textile and Apparel Industries in anti-dumping litigation against machine-made imports from Egypt, Jordan and China.

"I remember that when I went to Morocco for business, when I opened a newspaper, there was always good news," Dibling said. "Even if it is a developing country, even if you know people are suffering a lot, they wanted to take the positive signal instead of the negative signal and I thought it was amazing. So a few years ago, I was too depressed by all this negative news [in Europe], and I decided to open my practice [in Morocco] and use the knowledge that I had on trade and to benefit the industries with this practice. And I remember at that time, when I left my firm, they all told me, 'You're too young. What you're doing is stupid.' But basically, I went [to Morocco] and it was a success because nobody else did that. There was a need for a trade lawyer."

WHY SHE IS AN INTERNATIONAL TRADE ATTORNEY:

Although she has expertise working with corporations and national governments, Dibling says she's thrilled when she can win for individuals, especially in cases where companies have been able to invest more in their employees after duties were imposed on them. Witnessing those social and environmental results on a large scale after winning a case is precisely what inspires her every day.

"I decided to work for the interest of industries, so for EU industries and, by extension, Moroccan industries. But behind those industries you have many jobs, and behind jobs you have individuals," Dibling said. "And so I'm really proud when I can say to clients that we won a case, because the results are keeping employment in Europe and Morocco. As a trade lawyer, I know it's business, but I can feel the social fiber of it, and I really appreciate that."

HOW SHE THINKS THE LEGAL INDUSTRY WILL CHANGE IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS:

Dibling says social and environmental concerns will continue to affect and be affected by international trade, and that engaging in trade activities that are compatible with those concerns is paramount.

"I think after the Second World War, it makes sense to say that free trade was the goal to reach without any major rules or major concern," Dibling said. "But trade without [the] environment, it means nothing. [The] environment should come first now, and people need to understand that, and it's not that easy. It's easier in our countries, but when we talk about China or Russia, they don't care about the environment right now. So I don't think you can see trade isolated with other concerns like the environment and social consideration. For me, these are the basics of our society and our future. I'm sure that as a trade lawyer, my practice will widen significantly to include all environmental considerations and social considerations."

— As told to Nicole Rosenthal

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2022 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,350 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of April 30, 2022, to be eligible for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed. All Content © 2003-2022, Portfolio Media, Inc.