Robert Spano

Partner

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London Paris



Robert is a partner in the London and Paris offices and the Co-Chair of the firm's Geopolitical Strategy and International Law Practice Group, Artificial Intelligence Practice Group, and of the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Practice Group. He is a member of the Paris Bar and the Icelandic Bar.

Robert is one of Europe's leading platform and technology litigators for multinational companies before the Court of Justice of the European Union and leads a multidisciplinary team on regulatory compliance and strategic engagement with regulators in the field of digital rights, online platform regulation, data protection and on the intersection between artificial intelligence and fundamental rights. He is among Europe's foremost experts on the EU's Digital Services Act and the EU AI Act. He leads a team that coordinates cross-border disputes with local counsel before the national courts of the United Kingdom and Member States of the European Union.

He is a leading expert in geopolitical strategy and international law, in particular advising multinational companies and sovereigns navigating the interplay between the United States and the law and regulatory structure of the European Union. He is one of the world's leading authorities in public international law, business and human rights and the law of the European Convention on Human Rights, principles of business and human rights (ESG, environment, social and governance) and governmental affairs and policy, bringing unparalleled experience from senior roles in the judiciary, private practice and academia. Clients have stated that "*Robert Spano is a highly authoritative figure in public international law, who draws effectively on his wealth of experience as the former President of the European Court of Human Rights".*

Robert is ranked by Chambers and Partners as a Global Market Leader in Business and Human Rights Law in its 2026 Global Guide, clients emphasising his ability to bring his human rights expertise into the corporate context. He is listed in the 2025 edition of *Best Lawyers in the United Kingdom* as a leading lawyer for Human Rights and Public International Law. He is also recognised by *The Legal 500 UK 2025* for International Arbitration, Public International Law, TMT, Administrative and public law, Data protection, privacy and cybersecurity, ESG and Artificial Intelligence. He is also named to *Lawdragon's* 100 Leading AI & Legal Tech Advisors (2024-2026) and 500 Leading Global Cyber Lawyers lists (2024-2025).

He is the former president of the European Court of Human Rights, the youngest judge ever to be elected to the presidency in the Court's 60 year history. When leaving the Court his colleagues published a Liber Amicorum in his honour stating that "*during his term as president he demonstrated exceptional leadership qualities, showing creativity and imagination in improving the functioning of the Strasbourg institution*".

Robert sits on the Panel of Arbitrators and Conciliators of the World Bank's International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID), and is an honorary bencher of the

Capabilities

Transnational Litigation
Appellate and Constitutional Law
Artificial Intelligence
Consumer Protection
ESG: Risk, Litigation, and Reporting
First Amendment and Free Expression
Geopolitical Strategy and International Law
Judgment and Arbitral Award Enforcement
Litigation
Privacy, Cybersecurity, and Data Innovation
Public Policy
Tech and Innovation

Credentials

Education

University of Oxford - 2000 Magister Juris
University of Iceland - 1997 Law Degree

Admissions

Iceland - Icelandic Bar
France - Barreau de Paris (avocat communautaire)
England & Wales - Registered Foreign Lawyer

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Middle Temple.

Recent and ongoing representations include:

EU Litigation, Platform Regulation/Compliance and Artificial Intelligence

- Counsel of Record for a multinational tech company before the Court of Justice of the European Union in a challenge against the European Commission's designation of the company as a Very Large Online Platform under the Digital Services Act (Case T-91/26, C-40/26 P, and T-367/23 R).
- Counsel of Record for a multinational tech company on appeal before the Court of Justice of the European Union challenging the imposition by the European Commission of a supervisory fee under the Digital Services Act (Case C-745/25 P).
- Counsel of Record for a multinational tech company challenging the imposition by the European Commission of a supervisory fee under the Digital Services Act before the General Court of the European Union (Case, T-91/26).
- Advising a multinational tech company in a number of investigations by the European Commission (*Preliminary Findings*) under the Digital Services Act.
- Advising a multinational tech company on EU/ECHR law in competition proceedings before the German national courts.
- Advising a number of global online platforms on regulatory compliance in the implementation of the EU's Digital Services Act.
- Advising a number of multinational companies on EU/ECHR law aspects in tax and competition proceedings before national EU authorities and courts.
- Advising Kronospan AG on EU/ECHR law aspects in appeal proceedings before the Polish Supreme Court.
- Representing Kronospan AG on EU law aspects in the tax field before the European Commission.
- Advising a multinational tech company in appeal proceedings under the GDPR ('General Data Protection Regulation') before the Luxembourg Court of Appeal and the French Council of State.
- Advising a multinational company on the intersection between artificial intelligence and fundamental rights under EU law.
- Advising a multinational company on the interplay between the EU AI Act and the GDPR.
- Advising a multinational company on AI governance and the use of generative AI in product development.
- Advising a multinational company in the EU consumer protection field on access to documents before national authorities and the European Commission.

Geopolitical Strategy and International Law, the European Convention on Human Rights, Climate Change law, Business and Human Rights and International Arbitration

- Advised a multinational finance institution on EU/ECHR law in criminal proceedings before the French national courts.
- Advising a multinational bank in proceedings before the United Nations' Global Compact under international human rights law.
- Advising a global petrochemical company on issues under EU climate law, ECHR law and international climate law.
- Advising a multinational bank in tort proceedings before the US Federal Courts on issues under public international law and international human rights law.

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- Advising a multinational company in the oil & gas industry on litigation and regulatory compliance issues under EU law and international climate law.
- Advising a US multinational company in cross-border tort litigation before the Dutch national courts.
- Advising a number of multinational companies on regulatory compliance issues under the EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive ('CSDDD').
- Counsel for the defendant in an international commercial arbitration in the aluminium and energy sectors.
- Provided an independent expert opinion in enforcement proceedings under the ICSID-Convention.
- Provided an independent expert opinion in an ongoing dispute between Sovereign States under public international law and international human rights law.
- Advising a sovereign state in the establishment of a new international treaty-based organisation for the promotion of regional economic and environmental collaboration.
- Advising the National Power Company of Iceland (Landsvirkjun) on its compliance with the minimum safeguards criteria of the EU Taxonomy Regulation.
- Advising multinational companies on disclosures under the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive ('CSRD').
- Advising multinational companies on business and human rights obligations under EU law and international human rights law.
- Advising a multinational company on the legal status of its employees resident in a third-state under international human rights law.
- Drafted a report, at the request of the Prime Minister of Iceland, on amendments to the human rights chapter of the Constitution of the Republic of Iceland.

Robert is a visiting professor of law at the University of Oxford and also serves part-time as a tenured professor of law at the University of Iceland, where he served as dean of the faculty before being elected to the international judiciary.

Robert graduated with a Magister Juris Degree in European and Comparative Law from the University of Oxford where he was awarded the Clifford Chance Prize (proxime accessit) and the Civil Procedure Prize for his scholastic achievements. Prior to his studies at Oxford, he studied international trade law and EU law at the University of Leuven, Belgium, and graduated with a Candidatus Juris Degree from the Faculty of Law, University of Iceland.

Robert is admitted to the Icelandic Bar (EEA lawyer) and is a registered foreign lawyer in the United Kingdom.

He is fluent in English, French, Italian, Danish and is a native Icelandic speaker.

Professional activities and pro-bono service

- Member, Board of the Register of Damage for Ukraine.

- Arbitrator, ICSID Panel of Arbitrators and Conciliators, World Bank.
- President of the Board of Patrons, Gender Champions in the Judiciary Network.
- Visiting Fellow, Mansfield College, Oxford.
- Member, Board of the Academy of International Affairs (NRW), Bonn.
- Patron, ELSA (European Law Student's Association) Law Review.
- Member, Advisory Board, ECHR Law Review.

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- Member, Advisory Board, School of Law and Social Justice, University of Liverpool.

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