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Bird & Bird pitches into CEE with launch of four new offices

By Ben Moshinsky

BIRD & Bird has launched four offices in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) in an ambitious push to gain work from new growth markets.

The firm has simultaneously opened in Bratislava, Budapest, Prague and Warsaw, with technology and media partner Stephen Kines spearheading the initiative.

Kines joined the firm in May from Prague technology, media and telecoms boutique Kines Böhmová & Schollaert. Until 2004 he was head of CEE technology and telecoms at Linklaters.

Bird & Bird's expansion comes just months after Linklaters decided to axe its offices in the capitals of Slovakia, Romania, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

Kines said: "I've spent the whole time [since joining the firm] recruiting, but I've tried to avoid the obvious of taking all the lawyers from the collapsing Linklaters offices."

Kines has hired IT lawyer Maciej Gawronski, who joins from local firm M Furtek i Wspólnicy, to lead the Warsaw office. In addition to opening its own

five-lawyer office in Warsaw, Bird & Bird has signed an alliance with Polish firm Grynhoff Wozny Malinski, one of the market's biggest players with 90 lawyers.

In Budapest Bird & Bird has drafted in Andrea Simandi, once the Hungarian head of IT/IP at Linklaters. Simandi left the magic circle firm in 2005 to set up her own IP and

IT boutique in Budapest.

Leading the Prague office is former Clifford Chance senior associate Tomas Novak, who specialises in M&A and corporate work. EU competition and corporate law specialist Martin Maxa joins the firm as Bratislava head after establishing his own corporate and commercial practice.