

FROM LISBON TO CENTRAL/EASTERN EUROPE - RAPOSO BERNARDO

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While Lisbon is best known as a platform to Portuguese-speaking countries, a new trend of looking east is emerging, says Nelson Raposo Bernardo, Managing Partner of Raposo Bernardo.

"With the lack of liquidity and financing currently in Portugal, we have been observing a growth in clients looking to Central and Eastern Europe for investment opportunities," he says. "And they are mostly focusing on Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine, and also Russia."

Earlier this year, the Portuguese and Polish Presidents spoke at a joint conference regarding economic cooperation and highlighted the successful investment by many Portuguese companies in Poland. While there aren't many Polish investments in Portugal yet, adds Raposo Bernardo, the hope is that over the coming year more investment will start to flow between the two countries.

Aside from the traditional sectors, such as corporate and commercial law, the firm is advising companies from IT, real estate and construction investigating the possibilities Central and Eastern Europe have to offer.

But rather than using firms based there, interestingly they are using Lisbon as a base from which to do so, says Raposo Bernardo, going with their existing Portuguese advisers. "But while we serve our clients mostly from our office in Lisbon, we felt that having someone on the ground was an advantage."

Therefore Raposo Bernardo opened offices in Poland and Romania in the first half of 2009, he says, to support clients that were beginning to turn their attention towards Central and Eastern Europe.

Now, they say they are even seeing Spanish clients looking to invest there, Raposo Bernardo adds. "This is a priority project for us, and we believe that this trend will continue."