



Working With Spaniards

Agata Demuth, a partner at Domański Zakrzewski Palinka law firm, talks to Beata Gołębowska-Chęciak.

■ **Spanish developers have invested extensively in Poland. What has been the effect of the global crisis on this?**

Spanish developers were indeed quite active on the Polish real estate market at the beginning of the decade. They would invest in practically all types of real estate projects, especially housing ones. Interestingly, the Polish market attracted not only large and well-known investors but also smaller players, including individuals who believed that real estate made excellent investments and planned to invest on a short-term basis.

Developers have been less active for the last two years, which was obviously linked to the global crisis, especially since Spain was among the countries that suffered badly. My

observations show that many minor investors decided to exit their projects early and discontinued or radically limited their Polish activities (perhaps for a while only). However, the major players still operate and although circumstances forced them to suspend some projects for the time being (particularly those at an early stage of implementation for which funding was not provided yet), we can see that they are not withdrawing from Poland. Instead, they are waiting for the right time to bring the suspended projects back on the market.

■ **Can the Polish real estate market attract new Spanish players in the near future? Which sectors still have potential?**

The Polish real estate market is still attractive to potential investors. I presume Spanish investors will still carry out housing and shopping center projects. Their experience of infrastructure, public-private partnership and wind farm construction and operation projects is particularly worth noting. For the last few years, the crisis notwithstanding, we have seen Spanish developers intensify their activities in these three sectors and all the signs are that they have not had their last word yet. On the contrary, they keep discov-

ering new opportunities available in our country.

■ **Are the Spanish demanding clients? What should one pay special attention to when working with them?**

Spanish clients place a great emphasis on relations between them and their advisors. It is not sufficient for them to have an excellent lawyer or tax advisor by their side. First of all they want to develop a good rapport with the advisor and communicate easily on everything, and not just business issues.

It is worth emphasizing that the Spanish way of doing business differs from the Polish one. It is more interpersonal relations-oriented. It must be remembered that, for more than a century, the Spanish have invested mainly on their market. Therefore, they have their own ways of doing things and find it difficult to accept some foreign standards. How important these things are for the Spanish is best shown by their preference to work with law firms that have Spanish desks. In our firm, we have a team of several lawyers who speak fluent Spanish. Most of them have studied and/or worked in Spain, so they know the local circumstances from experience. This is what our clients expect and get.