

GLOBAL INSIGHTS: SECONDEES AT HENGELER

INTERVIEW WITH **MYEONGHA JEONG**, YULCHON

1 | Please introduce yourself and describe your career path to date.

I am Myeongha Jeong from Yulchon, South Korea. I've been practicing antitrust and competition law in Korea since 2018, working on a range of matters including cartels, abuse of dominance, and merger control. During the last few years, I've gained extensive experience handling multinational merger filings – both as global counsel and as local counsel. To that end, I pursued an LL.M. at NYU in the U.S. and subsequently applied for a secondment opportunity at Hengeler Mueller.

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2 | How did you come to start your secondment with us? Are there any specific reasons why you chose Hengeler?

I had observed that the U.S. approach to competition law tends to be more business-friendly, whereas the EU applies a more rigorous and structured review process. Korea's system falls somewhere in between, drawing on elements from both the U.S. and EU models.

This comparative perspective made me even more eager to experience EU practice firsthand. I reached out to Hengeler Mueller because I was aware that the firm had previously hosted Korean secondees, and also because of my personal connection to Germany as I had studied in Munich as an exchange student.

3 | Which areas of law do you mainly focus on during your secondment?

My main focus is antitrust and competition law. It's both my area of expertise and something I genuinely enjoy. So far, I've worked on several merger control cases, including market analysis and preparing merger filings for the German Federal Cartel Office. I particularly enjoyed the process of delving into market definitions. It gave me the opportunity to explore new industries and learn about different technologies and products.



4 | What are the most significant differences between the South Korean and the German legal system?

Broadly speaking, the fundamental concept of competition law is the same in both systems: protecting the market and consumer welfare by prohibiting practice that can hurt market competitiveness. In both Korea and the EU (including Germany), whether a practice is deemed unlawful largely depends on market shares and economic effects, with a strong reliance on economic analysis. One key difference, however, lies in the level of business-friendliness. Based on my own professional experience, the Korean merger control regime tends to be more business-friendly than the EU's system, reflecting domestic industrial policy considerations to some extent.

5 | How does the work at Hengeler differ from your home law firm?

Since Yulchon is also a full-service law firm with a broad range of specialized practice areas, the nature of my work has not changed significantly. As a competition law lawyer, I deal with broad competition law related matters and represent clients before the authorities and in the court.

One noticeable difference is the collaborative drafting tools. At Hengeler, it seems common for colleagues to work on a draft simultaneously using co-authoring tools, with feedback exchanged in real time. At my home firm, I typically prepare a full draft first, which is then reviewed and commented on by the partner.

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6 | What did you take away from the secondment, professionally and personally?

The most valuable takeaway has been the opportunity to collaborate with lawyers from diverse legal backgrounds. It helped me enhance my communication skills and adapt to different legal reasoning styles and working methods. On a personal level, being in a new environment encouraged me to take more initiative in unfamiliar situations, which deepened my confidence in adjusting quickly to different lifestyles and settings. Most of all, I really enjoy meeting new people and being part of an international group of friends from all across Europe.



7 | What was your most memorable or unique moment during your time here?

When I first arrived in Brussels, I was invited to the office Christmas party, which was incredibly warm and welcoming. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet people and feel part of the team even before officially starting work. At the Brussels office, we try to celebrate most holidays with small snacks and drinks, which creates a very friendly atmosphere. For Korean New Year, I brought some traditional snacks and beverages to share, and we even went out to a Korean restaurant for dinner together. Brussels also has many beautiful and easily accessible parks. Parc du Cinquantaire, which is close to my apartment, has become my favorite spot. It's the perfect place to unwind and appreciate the calm side of the city.

8 | . A different viewpoint: What makes South Korea exciting for a secondment in the legal sector?

Culturally, Korea has long been a relatively homogeneous society, without a strong history of multicultural influence. As a result, it has preserved a rich and distinctive cultural identity that feels both exotic and deeply rooted in tradition. At the same time, Korea is a highly developed and fast-paced country, offering a fascinating blend of history and modernization. Seoul exemplifies this contrast. It's a dynamic metropolitan city filled with skyscrapers, yet you'll also find centuries-old royal palaces, Buddhist temples, and traditional houses nestled between high-rise buildings.

The Korean legal system, based on civil law system, incorporates elements from common law traditions, making it a compelling jurisdiction for international lawyers to observe comparative practices in action.

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9 | What's next for you – professionally and personally?

I plan to return to my home law firm, Yulchon, and continue representing clients before the Korea Fair Trade Commission. With the experience and deeper understanding I've gained of American and European competition law and procedures, I'll be better equipped to advise and support international clients in cross-border matters.

On a personal level, I hope to continue studying comparative law and further developing the insights I've gained through this secondment experience.