

# A MADRID OFFICE CAN 'ACT AS BRIDGE' TO LATIN AMERICA AND NORTH AFRICA - DS OVSLAW

*Posted on 04/07/2018*



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**Companies from across Europe are currently considering investment in Latin America, but understanding cultural differences is a vital part of providing effective legal advice**

Offices in Madrid can act as bridges between Europe and Latin America and North Africa, says Ángela López Molina, managing partner of DS OVSLAW's Madrid office. "Madrid has a privileged position that we need to take care of and maintain," observes López Molina. "It has always been seen as a bridge to Latin America and people see it as the equivalent of Miami in the US – meanwhile, Madrid also has a privileged relationship with North Africa."

Madrid's ability to act as a link to other continents is particularly important in today's market, López Molina says. "There is a boom in Latin America right now and people are looking into what is happening in the continent," she explains. Spanish companies, as well as businesses from other parts of Europe are currently considering investments in Latin America and are therefore seeking legal counsel with relevant international experience.

**Maintaining close relationships**

"At DS OVSLAW, we have a strong international focus," López Molina says. "We not only practice Spanish law, we also offer our network and international experience to help clients develop their businesses abroad." DS OVSLAW has a presence in Madrid and Barcelona and belongs to the DS network, which has 26 offices around the world covering Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa and Canada. DS has French origins and a "Latin focus", according to López Molina. She adds that the DS network offers something different, in that it is present in locations such as Africa and South East Asia, which is "not common for Anglo-Saxon law firms with similarly large networks". López Molina argues that it is important to have a broad office network and maintain close relationships with clients in each jurisdiction. López Molina adds that having an understanding of cultural differences is another vital part of providing effective legal advice. "International experience goes beyond just speaking the language – it means recognising that things are done differently in different places. You need to have awareness, respect and an open mindset."

### **Communication is crucial**

López Molina, who was a winner at the *Iberian Lawyer* 40 under Forty Awards in 2017, was appointed as managing partner of DS OVSLAW's Madrid office earlier this year. After several years working as a lawyer in China with DS Avocats and then working in law firms from Spain, the UK and France, López Molina moved to Madrid seven years ago to create and lead the international legal department of a listed Spanish infrastructure company. In her new role at DS OVSLAW's Madrid office, López Molina oversees the activities of a firm that focuses on "complex M&A transactions, corporate and commercial law, infrastructures, internet and new technologies, pharma, real estate, labour and tax". López Molina says the DS OVSLAW Madrid office is currently expanding and looking to hire "new talent". She adds that communication has become a "critical component of the law firm's strategy and, if done effectively, it can help to attract both clients and lawyers".

In Madrid's busy and competitive market, effective marketing is of crucial importance, says López Molina. "You must send a very clear message about who you are and what you are doing, where you are and where you want to go," she explains. "If this is not clear, then you risk wasting your resources."

### **'Specialisation is essential'**

Clients are very clear about what they expect from their legal counsel and are also very aware of what law firms can offer. In this context, specialisation is "essential for law firms", according to López Molina. She adds: "Legal departments have changed – they are no longer simply reviewing the work provided by law firms, now they have large and sophisticated legal departments and they are demanding very specialised services." If law firms do not have an "effective focus and do not communicate their strengths efficiently they could just be another law firm in a competitive market, and clients will not easily perceive their added value", she says.

The high level of competition in the legal market has also created movement, with lawyers and law firms looking for new opportunities. "Everyone is looking at everyone – firms are looking in the market for lawyers that are particularly successful, interesting or specialised, in other words, lawyers who can be a real asset," says López Molina.