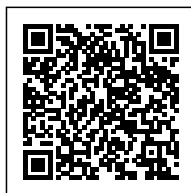


# A MODERN APPROACH: EMBRACING CHANGE, ANTONIO GARRIGUES

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Far from questioning the current reforms of the legal profession, Garrigues chairman Antonio Garrigues, believes that they are a very positive development.

Lejos de cuestionar las actuales reformas de la abogacía, el presidente de Garrigues, Antonio Garrigues, cree que el desarrollo es muy positivo. El mercado jurídico español ya ha empezado a beneficiarse -y lo seguirá haciendo, incluso más en un futuro cercano - de los cambios recientes que se han llevado a cabo en el panorama jurídico local como son la ley de Acceso a la Profesión de Abogado y Procurador de los Tribunales, la «laboralización» de los abogados, el proyecto de ley sobre Sociedades Profesionales y la recientemente aprobada directiva de la Unión Europea sobre servicios que, finalmente, incluye los servicios jurídicos. Le cuesta entender cómo estos cambios han tardado tanto en llegar pues le han aportado a España prestigio económico y político.

Positive change should always be welcomed. Even more so if it affects one's profession. The legal world in Spain has already started to benefit – and will do so even more in the near future – from the recent changes that have taken place in the local legal arena, namely the Law on Access to the

Legal Profession, the "labourisation" of lawyers, the draft law on Professional Associations Companies and the recently approved EU Directive on Services, which finally includes legal services. It is hard to understand why these changes have taken such a long time to arrive, given Spain's economic and political standing.

We have already successfully adapted to previous reforms, and I am convinced these new rules will also be assimilated with few hitches – especially as the intention is to improve legal professional services, while affording more protection to the client and promoting healthy competition amongst lawyers.

Now more than ever, clients are asking for, and have the right to receive, higher quality services from lawyers. Clients demand a closer relationship with their lawyers and increased security. These demands are logical in a modern society that operates on the basis of speed and efficiency.

Fortunately for all, the new generations of lawyers are more vital and less parochial than mine was, and that itself is very good. They will not feel comfortable as mere spectators to the changes occurring on a global scale. They know that, in order to be competitive, even if just at a local level, they cannot ignore what is going on in their community, in the rest of the country, in Europe and, basically, across the whole world.

They are also increasingly aware that, in order to succeed in their profession, they must speak several languages, be knowledgeable about technology, economics and geopolitics. This may sound excessive, but I will even go a step further: modern lawyers need to be conversant with both civil and common law systems because, like it or not, the centre of gravity in the legal world lies now in the Anglo- Saxon world and it will remain there for a while.

It is up to us, the older generation, to instil these new principles in young lawyers, so that they can look confidently to their professional future. In that respect, another key aspect in the modernisation of the legal profession in Spain should be that of training young professionals from the day they start their career. The Law on Access to the Legal Profession will partly solve this issue. But law firms will continue to have a clear duty of forming the legal community because although laws are always full of good intentions – which hopefully will be met – we cannot renounce our own responsibilities.

Garrigues has always been a key player in the modernisation of the legal world in Spain, as we were the first European firm to open an office in New York as well as in Brussels. We also brought to the Spanish legal market the concept of "partnership", as opposed to the traditional family firm structure. And we fully intend to remain a key contributor to the betterment of the legal profession in Spain.

The forward-thinking changes to the profession that are upon us, and our commitment to contributing to their development, will surely help us in becoming one of the few truly global players in the legal arena. This is not a wish, or an aim: it's a decision.

Antonio Garrigues is the chairman of Garrigues.