

# INTRODUCING ÁLVARO MENA, LABOUR RELATIONS DIRECTOR OF GLOBALVIA

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**Álvaro Mena is a pure example of how stereotypes have been left far behind in the unfair sonography of Spain, the Spaniards and their typical clichés. This young 34-year-old lawyer from Seville came to Madrid of his own free will to expand the professional, cultural and academic opportunities offered by the capital. His approachable and friendly yet highly professional and detailed way of being has opened the doors to him of important law firms and has led him to be part of Globalvia for the last five years, the last one as the head of Labour Relations of the group. With the naturalness of someone who has the talent, decision-making capacity and courage to take on new challenges, we are confident that he will continue to be successful in the years to come.**



**You were born in Seville and received a degree in Law from the University of Seville. What do you remember from that period? Why did you decide to study Law?**

Yes, that is right. I received a degree in Law from the University of Seville. However, I began my studies in Madrid, combining the degree in Law with International Business at C.U. Villanueva (a university school associated with the Complutense University of Madrid).

I recall my period as a student with a great deal of affection. My initial years in Madrid were spent in a residence hall in Ciudad Universitaria. I made many great friends to who I am still close. I am very grateful to my parents, who gave me the opportunity to study in another city, with all the effort that meant.

I am aware that there are some very prestigious universities in Seville. However, I wanted to move to

another city, and specifically, I was very interested in what Madrid could offer academically and culturally.

After my stay in Madrid, I returned to Seville, where I had been offered the opportunity to work in a law firm, which allowed me to complete my studies while beginning my professional experience.

From the start, I was certain that I wanted to be a lawyer. When I was a student, I was particularly attracted to subjects related to literature, social sciences and the Legal world in general. There again, I have always had an interest in negotiations in general and the Regulatory area in particular.

### **What was your first experience of working in Madrid? And about the profession?**

As I indicated before, I have always been attracted by the practice of Law. However, when I completed my university degree, I had not chosen a specific branch of Law to specialise in.

Fortunately, I have had the opportunity to work in a number of firms, and my work has been in a variety of fields. This has allowed me to get to know specific aspects of the profession, helping me to decide on my specialisation in the area of Labour Law.

The truth is that the practice of Law was what I expected. However, I must admit that I was surprised by the very different specifics in the practice of Law between the different Legal areas.

I began my work experience in Seville and moved back to Madrid with a great deal of satisfaction and excitement due to the job opportunity that I had received in the city. Later, I moved to London for some time and worked at the headquarters of a British international firm. At that time, I could see the differences that there could be in Legal advice according to the geographic location and the relevance of socio-cultural aspects in the profession.

All the above leads me to make a positive assessment, as I was able to extend my experience in different environments at a national and international level.

I am happy that I settled in Madrid, as it is the ideal city for my professional and personal development. However, I travel abroad often, and I must confess that I feel the need to go regularly to Seville. So I have not lost my accent or my links to the city where I was born.

### **You began in private legal practice in 2011. You worked in law firms including Anisi Muela & Blanes Abogados - Asesores de Empresa, Ventura-Garcés & López-Ibor advocats (before their split) and the international firm Eversheds, first in the UK and then in Eversheds Sutherland (Spain). However, you've worked most of your career so far in your current company, Globalvia, where now you are Labour Relations director. How did you shift to in-house legal services?**

The truth is I had never considered a professional career as an in-house company lawyer. From the start of my work experience, I was convinced that I would be providing Legal advice in a law firm.

However, I was always interested in the business world and the corporate world in general. This interest increased when I began to provide advice to multinational companies at the law firms you mentioned in your question.

In 2015, Globalvia asked me to join them as one of the company's in-house lawyers. Making the change was not an easy decision for me. It was a plan I had not considered before.

I decided to make a move to in-house legal services because I considered I would have the possibility of providing legal advice and applying it across the company, as well as increasing my business vision in a company with global scope.

Moreover, I had already advised Globalvia as an external lawyer, so I knew the organisation's dynamics and internal operation. I could not refuse the opportunity of working in a multinational company that is a leader in its sector.

In my opinion, alternating Legal practice in a company and in a law firm provides a great deal of added value to any professional. Thus, regardless of where services and Legal advice are provided, I consider it is increasingly important to know the business in a corporate environment and the technical rigour developed in law firms.

**Globalvia is a Spanish company based in Madrid (Torre de Cristal), whose primary business is the design, construction, maintenance and operation of transport projects. It was founded in 2007 and is now present in 7 countries: the United States, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Chile, Costa Rica and Mexico. It manages 29 projects, including both roads and railways. How do you recall your beginnings in the company? Who were your mentors (if you had any)?**

Globalvia was created in 2007 through the merger of the concessionary activity in the infrastructure sector of FCC and Caja Madrid (currently Bankia) with the aim of leading the global management of infrastructures through the union of the two entities.

In 2016, the pension funds PGGM (Netherlands), OPTrust (Canada) and USS (UK) became 100% owners of the company's shares. The aim of these shareholders was to allow the development of the portfolio of concessions at the time and to carry out future investments that would continue its growth.

This was the context in which I joined Globalvia in 2016, at a time of substantial modifications in the company with respect to its shareholder structure and expansion of its activity.

All this represented a professional challenge that I accepted with enthusiasm. It allowed me to develop a variety of skills related to adapting to change and discovering at first hand the new strategic keys of the organisation.

In my work, I have had the good luck to meet great professionals who have had a great impact on me in all aspects. I will not mention them all now, as the list would be too long, but I am thinking of many colleagues who have had an undeniable positive influence on my professional development.

In the business environment, Belén Castro Giménez, Human Resources manager, supported me from the time I joined Globalvia with her extensive experience in the sector of managing transport infrastructure concessions, which allowed me to understand quickly and precisely the business vision and special features of the organisation.

In the Legal area, I should highlight the international influence of Lindi Rudman, head of the Financial Services, Investment Funds and Banking Regulation area of Eversheds Sutherland London, as well as Pamela Thompson, the chairperson of the firm.

I also had a close professional relationship with Jacobo Martínez Pérez de Espinosa, the partner-director of Eversheds Sutherland Spain. Jacobo was the main reason for my specialisation in Labour Law. I was pleasantly surprised to see that he appeared on the cover of the September issue and was very interested in the interview with him. I recommend you should read it.

Finally, I cannot leave out the influence and support of Ignacio García-Perrote Escartín, the judge of the Labour Division of the Supreme Court. As you all know, Ignacio is an eminent member of his profession, and I have had the luck to see him on a number of occasions at the academic and Labour level.

**What is the structure of the Legal and Human Resources Department of Globalvia?**

The Legal Advisory area of Globalvia is composed of eight legal professionals who provide Legal advice to companies in the group and supervise all legal matters in the company.

However, the Labour Relations Department is part of the Human Resources, Communication and Corporate Social Responsibility area, in which there are eleven colleagues. The Labour Relations

department supervises and advises on all aspects that influence Labour matters.

**As Labour Relations director, what are your day-to-day duties? What is the direct geographic scope of your management, and what employees are we talking about?**

From the geographic point of view, the international presence of Globalvia covers Spain, the United States, Chile, Costa Rica, Ireland, Mexico, and Portugal, since in 2010, its main investment focus was redirected to OECD countries.

As Labour Relations director, I am responsible for defining the Legal and Labour policy of the group of companies and its practical application in companies in which Globalvia has a holding, delegations, concessionaires and other places of work.

In this sense, I am directly involved in any aspect of Labour and Health and Safety Law affecting the companies established in these countries. I am part of the Sustainability Committee and the Equality Committee in Globalvia. I am also a regular advisor for the Company's Compliance Committee.

I currently receive direct support in my team from Lorena Dorado Cabrero. Lorena is an excellent professional who joined Globalvia after working in a number of law firms, so we share a certain vision in our daily work.

There are 2,000 professionals working at Globalvia, all committed to providing the very best service in line with the strictest standards

In addition, in my day-to-day work, I am in continuous contact with the human resources managers of the Globalvia companies, who report to me any matters that occur related to Labour matters. In addition, I am always in touch with local law firms located in each of the jurisdictions in which the company is present.

I work in various countries with a variety of working hours and socio-cultural characteristics. This allows me to operate in a very dynamic environment and extend my overall knowledge of practical aspects outside the purely Legal sphere.

**You define yourself as a "hard-working, social and rational" person. I imagine that in your work, you will also sometimes have to make decisions that are not entirely pleasing for the employees. What other qualities do you consider important to perform your duties successfully?**

It is true that there are some circumstances in the performance of my functions that require decisions or procedures that are not so pleasant for the employees.

For example, the management of dismissal of employees is one of these functions. With respect to this question, my efforts have always been directed towards acting with as much professionalism and empathy as possible to avoid making a situation that is already disagreeable from the start anymore so.

One of the fundamental parts of my functions is focused on conflict resolution. I consider understanding between the parties as relevant, and so the need for knowing the needs or circumstances that generate the corresponding conflict to identify the ideal solution on each occasion.

Thus I consider that being friendly and managing conflicts do not necessarily have to be incompatible. However, I believe it is essential to maintain objectivity at all times, and there must not be any emotional influence that blurs the focus of either of the parties involved in the conflict.

**Recent times, which have been marked by the pandemic, have not been easy for anyone. To what extent has it impacted Globalvia, and specifically, your department?**

The limitations on mobility and the various lockdowns derived from the successive states of alarm

and emergency decreed by the government and health authorities have led to a sharp and historic fall in demand for all Globalvia assets during the pandemic.

Globalvia's railway and highway business lines have modified their operations given the exceptional situation caused by the Coronavirus. As a result, we have avoided the implementation of restrictive measures in employment which would harm Labour relations in the organisation.

In the department, our work rate has been very intense, with some uncertainty caused by all the Legal changes that have taken place overall. In addition, we have maintained our continuous monitoring of the actions carried out by the Globalvia companies in occupational risk prevention, providing assistance in implementing each of the protocols defined during the pandemic.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues for their commitment, effort, positive attitude and comradeship demonstrated during the pandemic. All of them have worked to ensure that the infrastructures managed by Globalvia continue to operate despite the circumstances.

**What are your plans for the future? Where do you see yourself in five years' time?**

Over the coming years, I would like to continue to develop professionally in an environment with a good labour climate, in which I can be responsible and acquire more in-depth and extensive knowledge in the area of Labour Law.

By Desiré Vidal

To read the full interview on issue number 108 click [here](#).