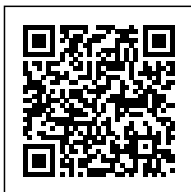


LABOUR LAW MUSCLE

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Category: [Archive](#)





On March 12, Iberian Lawyer will hold the first edition of the Labour Awards with the purpose, among others, of stimulating competitiveness among Spanish law firms and lawyers who focus on the area of labour law and of recognizing the excellence of experts in this field. For this reason, IBL wanted to approach ASNALA, the National Association of Labour Lawyers of Spain, which, founded in 1997, brings together more than half a thousand professionals in the sector. Since 2017, this association has been chaired by a woman, Ana Gómez Hernández, a partner in Ceca Magán



It has been more than twenty years since ASNALA was founded. One of the first things you did after taking office in 2017 was to form a Board of Directors with gender parity. What was this experience like?

Assuming the position of ASNALA's chairwoman was a challenge for me, and I did it with great enthusiasm and pride, both personally and professionally. Working on the Board of Directors as Vice President five years before my election as Chairwoman, helped me to get to know the institution and what it needed in the future. To this end, I formed a gender parity board, with the aim of positioning ASNALA as a reference point in Labour Law, which we are achieving with great success for us, since today we are a reference point for administrations and State public authorities of any political colour, as well as for the Spanish media, which consult us regularly to give our opinion on a future expected

reform or to interpret a certain ruling and its effects. As you can imagine, among the more than 550 partners that ASNALA has and its spirit of comradeship, which is very high, there is always a labour lawyer to provide such assistance from the practical knowledge of what is happening in labour matters. Throughout these two years in which we have positively transformed the association I have had much support and encouragement from my colleagues in ASNALA in general and from the Board in particular, because if today ASNALA is the point of reference in Labour Law, I can very proudly say, it is thanks to the work and effort made by the Board that I formed in its day and I want to thank it, because without it, all we have achieved in just two years would not have been possible. Its involvement has been fundamental and thanks to the great teamwork we have done we have achieved great success.

The fight for equality in the workplace takes place in all sectors. In this sense, as an observer and part of this movement, how would you say things have evolved? Do you observe a positive trend in the field of the practice of law? (We are talking about salaries, positions of responsibility, work-life balance, career plans...)

Significant progress is being made towards full equality, but unfortunately, this is an evil yet to be eradicated in the legal profession. The balance of work and personal life in general is punished in the legal sector. Law firms must move forward to overcome gender bias and prejudice. Similarly, two harmful effects of discrimination continue to persist; one is the glass ceiling, making the representation of female talent in organizations almost imperceptible, and the other is the salary gap. In short, I am convinced that equality is an attainable goal, and it is a matter of time.

Which has more weight in ASNALA activities, training or information?

Training is the cornerstone of the association and our main obligation to our members, which is why we organize several training days a year, including our Annual Congress, which is a reference among Labour Law professionals and on which we are already working to offer the XXI National Congress to the sector, that will be held in the beautiful city of Granada in October 22-24. On the other hand, given the large number of reforms that are continuously taking place in the labour field and those expected in the current legislature, the value of information is crucial so that updated contents reach our audience as quickly as possible, all of this in an agile and efficient way by the best experts. ASNALA is fully committed to excellence and highest quality content, serving its members and society in general with great vocation.

Case law is important in all law practice areas, but is it especially a key factor in Labour Law?

Case law is essential in law. But in the case of Labour Law, what has happened is that it has also played a leading role since we are facing new regulatory issues that are not yet outlined or clear. In this sense, it has opened a path, innovating, providing legal security and thus helping legal operators in our professional practice.

Digital transformation is a necessary step in all areas of law. How is it affecting the practice of Labour Law in particular?

Law firms have traditionally lived on the margins of innovation, but the landscape is changing, greatly influenced by digitalization and the opportunities that technology brings to the world of legal services. As a result of this reality, new specialties emerge and with them new ways of advising our clients and, like the rest of the sectors, the 21st-century law professional must also assume the intellectual challenge of adapting to the times if he does not want to lose competitiveness. Studies on the subject already illustrate how very interesting developments in the field of Robotization, Big Data, Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain or Design Thinking, are being carried out, being able to reduce, for instance, efforts in documentation management by 75% or developments that allow predicting the result of the judicial resolutions with almost 90% of success. In addition, when it

comes to attracting and retaining young talent, these developments are especially attractive, so much so that law schools are beginning to incorporate subjects such as Business Analytics, Smart Contracts or how to program in Blockchain technology into their syllabus. This is undoubtedly a challenge for the 21st-century lawyer profile.

New business models bring new working or legal services models such as the on-demand lawyer. How do these new roles affect Labour Law in Spain?

In my opinion, there is no specific difference in terms of the working environment; the “Marketplace” of lawyers is an emerging development and is coming much later than that of other sectors. It is too early to analyse the effects of their entry into the market, but what is certain is that they are a very interesting tool for minimising costs and attracting clients, always respecting the deontological rules of the bar associations, as well as regulations on competition. Likewise, we must take into account that the population is increasingly digital and therefore our clients, in the immediate rather than distant future, will look in these platforms for lawyers who specialise in their problems, just as they have done for more than two decades in other more advanced sectors, such as the exchange of goods or services that are more easily packaged.

What are ASNALA's challenges in the medium to long term?

Being a reference for consultation and support for the different public authorities is one of our strategic lines. Being able to do so for European and Latin American institutions is our most important challenge.

Interview by Desiré Vidal

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