

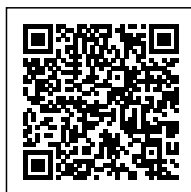
NAVIGATING THROUGH THE REGULATORY CHALLENGES - GOOGLE

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As Google continues to expand its online presence, products and business reach it means confronting new areas of regulation, says María González Ordóñez

Como Directora de Asesoría Jurídica de Google - España, Portugal e Israel, el trabajo de María González Ordóñez es tanto legal como formativo. La empresa no solo está desafiando los límites de la normativa actual, sino que impulsa la creación de áreas de regulación totalmente nuevas.

As the Head of Legal for Google in Spain, Portugal and Israel, María González Ordóñez's work is as much educational as legal, she says. The company is not only challenging the boundaries of existing legal regulation but prompting the creation of entire new areas of regulation altogether.

"Leadership in an organisation like Google takes on a far larger scope than offering mere in-house advice – we have to work with stakeholders and even the regulatory agencies to understand the impact of the technologies we are developing."

It can however be a challenge to work with the company's engineers to ensure that new products adhere to local and European regulatory norms, she admits. "We highlight the issues that may arise around compliance and non-compliance but ultimately much of what we do is risk management – we have to be able to take a very practical view as to what may or may not be allowed."

In this regard, the goal is to be involved as early as possible in product development. Google however has engineers located across the globe, with the majority of products managed from either its Googleplex headquarters in California, or European research centre in Zurich.

"Most products are launched globally with few if any local variations, so we have to be able to bring the European perspective. This requires legal awareness but also an understanding of the technologies involved, to know in which directions they are likely to evolve and what new legal risks this may present," says González Ordóñez.

Google maintains local legal capability in many of its largest markets, albeit in Europe, London is the focus of much of its regional transactional and regulatory expertise. In Madrid, González Ordóñez oversees a team of three lawyers, with a focus on commercial and contractual issues, litigation and enforcement, as well as marketing issues. Her remit also includes responsibility for Portugal and has recently been expanded to encompass Israel.

"Google has traditionally taken a very lean approach to its legal needs but there has been an increase in resources in recent years as matters have become more complex. The teams in the UK, France and Germany have notably grown, while our own expertise is increasingly focused towards expanding markets and the management of cross-border legal issues."

González Ordóñez's own focus is on commercial and regulatory issues. She qualified with Uría Menéndez but subsequently completed a Masters in IP and International Law at Columbia University, qualified at the New York Bar and worked in New York and London with US firm O'Melveny & Myers. In London she joined Skype as only its second in-house lawyer, before joining Google as the lead, and first, Iberian lawyer. "My time with Skype shaped me into the lawyer I am today. I had to provide solutions to all sorts of new legal challenges in an efficient, timely and business-oriented manner."

At Google the legal team uses Garrigues, Pedro Alemán and Hogan Lovells in Spain, alongside CCA in Portugal, for external issues, although she tries to handle the majority of Google's legal needs internally. "On the whole we tend to prefer firms with an enthusiasm for the technology. But we have found that in many respects we simply know the products better than the external lawyers which enables us to better see where the legal challenges lie."

González Ordóñez does though see a continuing rise in Google's legal needs. Looking ahead, areas such as privacy and data protection, including the "right to be forgotten" are likely to increase, especially after the launch of its +1 social network. In addition, copyright issues are likely to grow, as

its subsidiary YouTube moves towards a more premium content business model.

"We have to facilitate what the business currently wants to do, and to ensure that any new products comply with the regulation as it stands, but we also see a rise in our role as advocates – to communicate to the market and regulators where these new technologies may take us, and to help guide the legislative process."

María González Ordoñez is the Head of Legal for Google across Spain, Portugal and Israel.

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