

# 'ROBOTIZATION' OF SPAIN'S LAW FIRMS ESCALATES WITH GARRIGUES AI DEAL

*Posted on 25/04/2017*



Category: [Archive](#)



**Biggest Spanish law firm by revenue has announced it will use robots to speed up analysis of legal documentation, while Uría Menéndez confirms it is evaluating the use of AI for speeding up processes**

The 'robotization' of legal services offered by Spanish law firms took another massive leap with the recent announcement by Garrigues, the country's biggest law firm, that it has signed an agreement to use robots to manage legal documents.

Garrigues has said it is the "first time that such a system has been implemented in Spain by any law firm in Spanish". Meanwhile, Uría Menéndez has confirmed it is evaluating artificial intelligence (AI) as a tool for reducing workloads as well as the time spent completing tasks.

However, despite the fact that robots are increasingly doing the tasks that were formerly done by lawyers, firms have been anxious to reassure legal professionals that they will never be replaced completely, with some insisting that AI is no substitute for lawyers' "creativity or emotional intelligence".

## **Character recognition**

Garrigues recently announced it had signed an agreement with the Instituto de Ingeniería del Conocimiento (IIC) – which is associated with the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM) – to develop a project that will involve the use of robots for document management. A statement from

Garrigues – which is the the biggest Spanish law firm by revenue, with billings of almost €350 million in 2016 – said the firm would be implementing a “new platform, called Proces@, that enables faster and completely reliable management and analysis of the legal documentation it receives and analyses every day”. The statement added that the new platform – which is based on a data recovery system using text found in different formats, such as images or recordings – features “character recognition technology that enables the conversion of any scanned document of a summary into a format that facilitates later search and recovery”.

### **Pilot tests**

Garrigues also hinted that the robotization of its processes would not stop with the introduction of Proces@. It added: “In addition to the implementation of this new pioneering technology platform in Spain, the firm has been carrying out other pilot tests with state-of-the-art international software using the robotization of processes.”

Uría Menéndez is another firm that is evaluating AI as a tool for increasing the efficiency of both the management of documentation and the automation of day-to-day processes, according to the firm's systems director Santiago Gómez Sancha in Madrid. He says AI will soon play a fundamental role in law firms' work, reducing process times and workloads, and freeing up lawyers to focus on more important, value-added tasks.

Meanwhile, Pérez-Llorca is working towards implementing such technology, according to Mercedes Romero, a litigation and arbitration partner at the firm who believes that AI will soon form part of all the daily activities of law firms. “We have been incorporating various tools to better harness resources and time, and for the last 18 months we have been working with tech companies to find the best solutions to improve our services to clients,” she says. Romero adds that the firm has created an internal committee with the task of evaluating potential new technology, and the committee is trialling new tools in areas such as due diligence and litigation.

### **Minimise errors**

Ashurst is another firm using AI to help assess the best way to use resources to handle cases, as well as carry out some parts of its work. “In the area of legal technology alone, there are some highly effective tools, including contract automation and advice automation, which we are deploying into a number of different areas of our work,” says Mike Polson, Ashurst partner and the firm's co-head of innovation. He adds that cases increasingly begin with an initial assessment of the most efficient way to handle key stages, “perhaps using technology to help deliver elements of the work and making sure you have the right people working on the right elements, and from the right location.” Polson, who is based in the firm's Glasgow office, says such systems will start to become “business as usual”, with long lasting competitive advantage the prize for those law firms that can most effectively embed such systems into the way they work.

However, Romero says that AI cannot replace lawyers' creativity or emotional intelligence. Rather, it is a case of finding a niche where such technology can be used to optimize resources and minimize the risks of error, she adds.

