

SPORT SECTOR CLIENTS INCREASINGLY LOOKING FOR SPECIALIST LAWYERS - ROCA JUNYENT

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Though businesses in the sport industry want lawyers with knowledge of the sector, they also want specialists with expertise in areas such as competition, tax and labour

Clients hiring Spanish lawyers to work on sports-related matters are increasingly opting for specialist legal expertise, says Roberto Vallina Hoset, senior associate and head of the competition law department at Roca Junyent.

"As a specialist in EU and competition law, I consider myself something of an outsider in the sport law sector," he says. "However, from what I've experienced over recent years, clients such as sports entities and athletes are now wanting a lawyer with a fair understanding of sports regulations, but also with knowledge of the specificities of the particular practice area, whether it be competition, M&A, tax or labour law." He adds that, until recently, clients referred all their matters to the traditional external lawyer, highly specialised in sports-related problems. "The clients still rely to a great extent on those lawyers and they still do have a regular source of work," says Vallina Hoset. "However, clients are becoming increasingly aware of the impact of particular areas of law on their business. Though we are called in exceptional circumstances – as obviously, not every football club or athlete has competition law problems or face being discriminated against on the grounds of nationality

every day – some clients are willing to contact us for specialist advice. “Over the last two years, I’ve had an important number of cases with not a common thread between them other than the fact they are all related to sport,” Vallina Hoset says.

Whether lawyers actively seek out such sport-related opportunities depends on the particular case, says Vallina Hoset. “Sometimes we offer our services when we see a sports club or athlete is in need of specialist advice – other times, the client will contact us if they think our expertise could be useful in a given area or market. However, clients in the sport sector are increasingly taking the opportunity to deal with specialists in areas other than sports law.”