

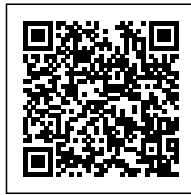
THE IN-HOUSE PROFESSION ACCORDING TO ACC EUROPE

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By *ilaria iaquinta*

"New Beginnings from an inspiring perspective." This is the title of ACC Europe's annual conference, which gathered the European members of the Association of Corporate Counsel (the "N world's largest international association of corporate lawyers with over 45,000 members in 90 countries) in Madrid on May 22-24. The traditional annual meeting, which was interrupted after the last edition in Edinburgh in 2019 due to the pandemic, returned. Around 400 in-house counsel met in the Spanish capital for a two-day debate and networking event. The aim was to discuss, exchange views and share experiences and ideas in order to shape the future of the profession together. How? Starting from the present. By discussing the most pressing issues for legal counsel, through 22 different working sessions dedicated to the different aspects of the profession, from the most purely legal (in the track indicated by the association as "Lead the Law"), and managerial ("Lead the Business") to personal growth ("Lead Yourself"). Among the topics, for example, crisis management, ESG, antitrust, whistleblowing, diversity equity & inclusion (DEI), digitalization and legal operations. Prior to the conference, **Iberian Lawyer**, media partner of the event, met Ilse de Loof, ACC Europe Chair and General Counsel at Swissport International, to shed light on the profession.

How have the events of the last two years influenced and affected corporate lawyers?

The most significant impact I've seen on corporate lawyers over the past two years is a significant increase in nonlegal responsibilities. Even before COVID, we were trending away from spending a majority of our time on strictly legal matters, and that's only accelerated as a result of COVID. We're increasingly being tapped to manage or advise on a variety of other issues, including DEI, sustainability, cybersecurity, privacy, and HR just to name a few.

However, COVID-19 has also had a positive effect on the profession: it has accelerated some trends such as digitalization...

Most certainly. Before COVID, legal departments were slowly getting comfortable with digitalization and embracing more and more technology. COVID quickly identified those that had implemented and upgraded their technologies early and exposed those that had dragged their feet. It quickly became a business imperative in order to remain competitive, and I think that is only going to continue and grow.

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