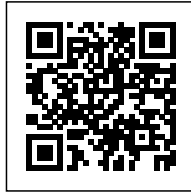


WLW POWER

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In its nearly two years of existence, the Women in a Legal World network has achieved more than many. Not surprisingly, this "network" is led by top women who one day had the brilliant idea of bringing women's voices in the legal sector together and working to empower them and boost their leadership



Despite the significant thrust this movement has given to the sector there is still a lot of work to be done and any help or collaboration is welcome. For this reason and on the occasion of the celebration of International Women's Day in March 8th, Iberian Lawyer, invited the WLW Board of Directors to a working breakfast where everything was discussed and the seed was planted for a monthly collaboration that will take the form of a hub where, under the name of IBL-Women in a Legal World Club, all matters concerning female legal professionals will be dealt with.

"The picture is much improved, but it still has structural defects," explains Marlen Estévez Sanz, president of WLW and partner in Litigation and Arbitration at Roca Junyent. "If we focus on the legal sector, the improvement during the last 5 years is almost imperceptible regarding women access to partner positions. As a matter of fact, we at Women in a Legal World are preparing a report in which, with data, we can see how we have evolved and, especially, how we are evolving in 2020," she continues. "We have to take into account that this is a transversal association that deals with all the professions in the sector: notaries, procurators, university faculty, firm and in-house lawyers, journalists, etc. Our intention with this report is also to see if the number of women in positions of responsibility has changed. In this regard, the current picture is not good and our intention is to improve it." "That is one of the reasons why we wanted to create the Equality Observatory," adds Clara Cerdán Molina, vice-president of WLW and director of legal advice at Grupo FerroAtlántica. "The objective is to continue building," she continues, "we have made progress, but we must improve through field work, getting closer to in house lawyers and law firms, although we will start by focusing on law firms as we feel it is more necessary. The aim is to draw up a kind of 'decatalogue of good practices' to help law firms in this regard. There are people who want to bet on equality, but they are lost, they do not know how to do it or where to start."

"We also want to see an increase in the number of female directors on Boards of Directors, which is precisely one of the topics we will be discussing at the Forum we are organising in May and the session titled 'Women Lawyers on Boards of Directors', from which we will also be issuing a report," says Marlen, adding that, "it all ties in with the 2020 challenge, to achieve 20% more equality; having by the end of this year, a 20% increase in the number of female deans, judges in the High Court of Justice, board members, procurators, in-house directors, etc. That is why the report we are preparing is so important, because what is really interesting is the assessment we will make at the end of the year."

"What we are trying to do is reach the sector not so much as a 'fight' but as a movement that ends when it is no longer necessary to talk about equality," says Noelia Marcos Ispuerto, member of WLW and director of the Iberoamerican Arbitration Journal CIAR Global. The first WLW meeting took place in September 2018, and since then they have managed to reach many of the most influential women in the whole country, including Queen Letizia. Its members are more than 150 professional women from the legal world in any of its practice areas and specialties. Contrary to what many may think, WLW understands that social change can only be achieved hand in hand with the other half of the world: men, as its president, Marlen, makes clear. "We are a women's association, but it is clear to us that we need men. We want to work hand in hand with them. The role of men is fundamental. We want them to get involved so that the change is real. Many of them are equality references. Precisely because of this conviction that men and women are complementary and that together we enrich companies and society, we are going to promote the idea of giving visibility to men who support our social project by being the ambassadors of change, friends of WLW."

CO-RESPONSIBILITY

For WLW, education is the cornerstone. In fact, the origin of WLW was a mentoring program aimed at law students. "We detected a lack of references," explains Clara. "We are living in a transition period and we need to give visibility to women who are worthy, who are and have been in decision-making positions and who are also keeping a work-life balance. It's hard to believe that they still feel the pressure of having to decide between being a mother or a professional, something we call the 'aha moment'," adds Marlen. All the members visiting us at Iberian Lawyer are mothers and hold executive positions in their respective companies.

"I couldn't do what I do if it weren't for my husband's support." This is Silvia Lopez Jimenez, WLW Treasurer and partner in Real Estate and Urban Planning at FieldFisher. "He's the one who drops kids to school and he's the one who is on the mom's group chat," she says. "We prefer talking about co-

responsibility than balance," says Marlen, explaining that for the labour framework to really facilitate the exercise of this co-responsibility, educational, legislative and business changes are needed. "We know that there are many men who want to take parental leave and cannot because it is socially frowned upon. Come on, man, if Bill Gates can drop his kids to school...", jokes Marlen. The WLW Board of Directors is convinced that this "network" will also benefit men, who will be able to assert their rights on an equal basis, with special attention to the generations to come. "We have formed a special group within WLW called Women in a Legal World Young, or as we like to call them, 'younger' so that we don't feel so old," jokes Clara. Ana Martínez Enguídanos, secretary of WLW and director of the President Cabinet of the General Council of Procurators of Spain, emphasizes that "since we were constituted as an association, we have felt supported by all the institutions of the world of Justice. For WLW, the collaboration and support to the WLW Board of Directors by the Advisory Council, which is formed by women of recognized prestige, has been key". The Advisory Council is made up of the following women: María Emilia Adán García, Dean of the Association of Registrars of Spain, Victoria Ortega Benito, President of the General Council of Spanish Lawyers, Soraya Saénz de Santamaría, former Vice President of the Spanish Government and partner of Cuatrecasas, Isabel Tocino, from Bank of Santander Executive Committee, Montserrat Surroca, Head of Courts Relations of the CEOE, Gloria Lomana, journalist and businesswoman, Pilar Cuesta, Counsel to the Spanish Council of State, Isabel Valldecabres, Director of Vice President's Cabinet of the Spanish Government, María José García Beato, Deputy Secretary of Banco de Sabadell's Board, Ana Ferrer García, Magistrate of the Second Chamber of the Supreme Court, Marta Silva Lapuerta, former State Attorney General, Ana López-Monís, notary, and Ana Pastor Julián, Second Vice President of the Spanish Congress.

In the picture, from left to right, Noelia Marcos Ispuerto, Silvia López Jiménez, Marlen Estévez Sanz, Clara Cerdán Molina y Ana Martínez Enguídanos.

Article by Desiré Vidal.

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