

Fieldfisher  
targeting the top 10

The legaltech shift

# Bruno Ferreira to lead PLMJ for another three years

In exclusive conversation with *Iberian Lawyer*, the managing partner reflects on innovation, strategic growth, and the firm's priorities in energy, technology, and defence



NextGen in-house lawyers 2025

# Editorial

Ilaria Iaquinta



## September reflections

September tends to divide opinions. For some, it is a month full of opportunities and fresh starts; for others, it signals the end of the summer break, the return to a fast-paced routine, and one final push before the year closes. What's beyond dispute is that September arrives brimming with renewed challenges and expectations. The summer is now firmly behind us. Beyond rest, this period has offered a valuable window for reflection.


In this edition of *Iberian Lawyer*, we turn our attention to a subject that has long shaped the legal agenda: sustainability. No longer a matter of good intentions alone, it has become both a regulatory requirement and a market imperative. New regulations place specific obligations on certain organisations, making sustainability a decisive factor in the reputational and strategic standing of law firms. Our feature compares the latest sustainability reports of Garrigues, Cuatrecasas and Uría Menéndez, offering a data-driven view of how Spain's three legal giants are tackling ESG challenges and commitments — both internally and in client-facing strategy.

But sustainability is just one part of the picture. Our *NextGen in-house lawyers* special highlights the renewed energy within corporate legal departments. A new generation of professionals is redefining the in-house legal role in Spain and Portugal: young lawyers leading departments, anticipating risk, introducing innovative tools, and responding with agility to regulatory, digital and ESG demands. Far from the traditional legal role, they bring critical thinking, strategic vision and deep business insight. This transformation is already reshaping the relationship between legal functions and business operations.

This issue also explores the M&A market in Spain during the first half of the year, offering key data and expert perspectives on trends and forecasts in a climate still shaped by global uncertainty. We examine the implications of the new EU Data Act for corporate data governance, and delve into ongoing regulatory debates around remote work and the right to disconnect.

Among our featured articles are profiles such as María Gonzales Gordón, and an insightful interview with Antonio Serrano Acitores, who offers a compelling reflection on what he calls the “digital renaissance” of the legal profession. We round out this issue with a critical look at the intersection of justice and technology, asking who truly governs the artificial judge in an increasingly automated world.

In Portugal, and exclusively for *Iberian Lawyer*, PLMJ confirms the reappointment of Bruno Ferreira as managing partner for a further three years. His continued leadership coincides with a period of institutional consolidation marked by strategic integrations, investment in key areas such as energy, tech and defence, and a strong commitment to professional management and digital tools. Meanwhile, Fieldfisher has formally entered the Portuguese market through its integration with André Miranda Associados, focusing on financial services, life sciences, technology and energy. We also take a closer look at the steady rise of the Legaltech ecosystem.

On the corporate side, we feature insights from the general counsel of VidaCaixa and Capgemini. And to complete this forward-looking edition, we include profiles of professionals such as Rachel Cohen and Fabio Bertoni who, alongside other exclusive contributions, provide a wide-ranging snapshot of talent, innovation and contemporary legal affairs. 



## 2025 EVENTS CALENDAR

### SEPTEMBER

- LC Energy Day Milan, 11/09/2025
- The LatAm Energy & Infrastructure Awards São Paulo, 11/09/2025
- Legalcommunity Labour Awards Milan, 18/09/2025
- Iberian Lawyer Forty Under 40 Awards Madrid, 25/09/2025

### OCTOBER

- Inhousecommunity Days Milan, 1-3/10/2025
- Legalcommunity Real Estate Awards Milan, 09/10/2025
- Iberian Lawyer Real Estate Talks&Drinks Madrid, 14/10/2025
- Inhousecommunity Awards Italia Milan, 16/10/2025
- Legalcommunity Marketing Awards Milan, 20/10/2025
- Inhousecommunity Day Switzerland Zurich, 23/10/2025
- Legalcommunity Litigation Awards Milano, 28/10/2025

### NOVEMBER

- Iberian Lawyer Inhousecommunity Day Madrid, 06/11/2025
- Iberian Lawyer Gold Awards Madrid, 06/11/2025
- FinancecommunityWEEK Milan, 10-13/11/2025
- Financecommunity Awards Milan, 13/11/2025
- LegalcommunityMENA Awards Riyadh, 20/11/2025

#### LEGEND

- Legalcommunity / LegalcommunityCH
- LegalcommunityMENA
- LegalcommunityWEEK
- Financecommunity
- FinancecommunityES
- FinancecommunityWEEK
- Iberian Lawyer
- The Latin American Lawyer
- Inhousecommunity
- Foodcommunity
- LC

## 2026 EVENTS CALENDAR

### JANUARY

- Legalcommunity Energy Awards Milan, 29/01/2026

### FEBRUARY

- Iberian Lawyer Finance Talks and Drinks Madrid, 03/02/2026
- Iberian Lawyer Labour Awards Madrid, 12/02/2026

### MARCH

- Legalcommunity Finance Awards Milan, 05/03/2026
- Iberian Lawyer Inspiraw Madrid, 10/03/2026
- Financecommunity Fintech Awards Milan, 19/03/2026
- Legalcommunity Fashion Summit Milan, 26/03/2026
- Legalcommunity IP&TMT Awards Milan, 26/03/2026
- LC Inspiraw Italia Milan, 30/03/2026

### APRIL

- Legalcommunity Tax Awards Milan, 16/04/2026

### MAY

- LegalcommunityCH Awards Zurich, 07/05/2026
- The Latin American Lawyer Women Awards São Paulo, 14/05/2026
- Legalcommunity Forty under 40 Awards Milan, 21/05/2026
- Iberian Lawyer Legaltech Day Madrid, 28/05/2026
- Iberian Lawyer IP&TMT Awards Madrid, 28/05/2026

### JUNE

- Legalcommunity Week Milan, 08-12/06/2026
- Legalcommunity Corporate Awards Milan, 10/06/2026
- Rock the Law Milan, 11/06/2026
- Iberian Lawyer Energy Day Madrid, 25/06/2026
- Iberian Lawyer Energy Awards Madrid, 25/06/2026

### JULY

- LC Italian Awards Italy, 02/07/2026



## ITALY

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IP&TMT		
Research Period from	01/01/24	DOWNLOAD SUBMISSION ↓
Research Period to	31/12/24	
Deadline Submission	08/11/2024	
Report Publication	Jun-25	

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Research Period to	31/01/25	
Deadline Submission	06/12/2024	
Report Publication	May-25	

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Report Publication	Jun-25	

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Report Publication	Jul-25	

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Research Period to	31/03/25	
Deadline Submission	18/04/2025	
Report Publication	Sep-25	

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Research Period to	30/04/25	
Deadline Submission	16/05/2025	
Report Publication	Oct-25	

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Research Period to	31/05/25	
Deadline Submission	13/06/2025	
Report Publication	Nov-25	

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Research Period from	01/04/24	DOWNLOAD SUBMISSION ↓
Research Period to	31/03/25	
Deadline Submission	30/05/2025	
Report Publication	Nov-25	

FINANCECOMMUNITY		
Research Period from	24/08/24	DOWNLOAD SUBMISSION ↓
Research Period to	31/08/25	
Deadline Submission	27/06/2025*	
Report Publication	Dec-25	

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## SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

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IP&TMT		
Research Period from	01/03/24	DOWNLOAD SUBMISSION ↓
Research Period to	28/02/25	
Deadline Submission	15/11/2024	
Report Publication	Jun-25	

ENERGY & INFRASTRUCTURE		
Research Period from	01/04/24	DOWNLOAD SUBMISSION ↓
Research Period to	31/03/25	
Deadline Submission	17/01/2025	
Report Publication	Aug-25	

FORTY UNDER 40		
Research Period from	01/05/24	DOWNLOAD SUBMISSION ↓
Research Period to	30/04/25	
Deadline Submission	02/05/2025	

GOLD		
Research Period from	01/07/24	DOWNLOAD SUBMISSION ↓
Research Period to	30/06/25	
Deadline Submission	04/07/2025	
Report Publication	Nov-25	

## SWITZERLAND

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SWITZERLAND		
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Deadline Submission	21/02/2025	

## MENA

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MENA		
Research Period from	01/08/24	DOWNLOAD SUBMISSION ↓
Research Period to	31/07/25	
Deadline Submission	27/06/2025	

## LATAM

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ENERGY & INFRASTRUCTURE		
Research Period from	01/05/24	DOWNLOAD SUBMISSION ↓
Research Period to	30/04/25	
Deadline Submission	16/05/2025	
Report Publication	Jan-26	



## Bruno Ferreira to lead PLMJ for another three years

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## On the move

### Uría Menéndez Portugal: Antonio Villacampa and Marta Pontes managing partners

Uría Menéndez has reappointed **Antonio Villacampa** and has appointed of **Marta Pontes** as managing partners of the Lisbon office, positions they will assume on January 1, 2026. **Bernardo Diniz de Ayala**, who has shared the management with Villacampa for the last eight years, will continue to be associated with the firm as head of the public law and projects area.



DIOGO XAVIER DA CUNHA, NUNO CABEÇADAS, SOFIA MARTINS AND NUNO GOUVEIA

### Nuno Cabeçadas takes over as managing partner at Miranda

Miranda has appointed **Nuno Cabeçadas** as its new managing partner, succeeding **Diogo Xavier da Cunha**, who will now serve as senior partner and chairman of the board.



FRANCISCO BOAVIDA SALAVESSA, PEDRO SILVEIRA BORGES, ALEXANDRA VALPAÇOS AND MANUEL HENRIQUES

### Sérvulo appoints four new partners

Sérvulo & Associados has promoted **Francisco Boavida Salavessa** and **Pedro Silveira Borges** to equity partners, and **Alexandra Valpaços** and **Manuel Henriques** to hired partners. With these latest promotions, the firm now has a team of 35 partners, out of a total of 120 lawyers.





## CNMV: Juan Rodríguez de la Rúa Puig new GC

The Spanish Securities Market Commission (CNMV) has appointed **Juan Rodríguez de la Rúa Puig** as its new general counsel and board secretary, effective September 1st, 2025.

## CMS promotes Eva Ceca as new employment partner

CMS Albiñana & Suárez has approved the promotion and appointment of **Eva Ceca**, previously counsel in the employment area, as a new partner.



## Deloitte Legal: Rubén Chaparro joins the tax department

Deloitte Legal has hired **Rubén Chaparro**, formerly of PwC, as a partner in its tax department.



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## On the web



### The pulse of M&A in Iberia

The first half of 2025 has shown a mixed picture for the mergers and acquisitions market in Spain and Portugal. According to *Mergermarket's* global and regional M&A ranking, the total value of transactions reached \$82.582m, which is equivalent to approximately €70.195m at the current exchange rate. This figure represents a decrease compared to the same period in 2024, when the total amounted to \$84.876m (approximately €72.145m). In percentage terms, the value of transactions has decreased by around 2.7% compared to the previous year.

Looking at the number of transactions, the contraction is even more evident. In the first half of 2025, 310 transactions were recorded, compared to 532 transactions in the same period in 2024, representing a decrease of 41.7%. This data reflects a more selective and cautious market, in which larger transactions are prioritized over a greater number of smaller transactions.

In terms of transaction value, the firms leading the Iberian market in this half-year are, in descending order: Uría Menéndez (€12.839m), A&O Shearman ( €7.204m), Greenberg Traurig (€7.055m), Weil Gotshal & Manges (€6.828m), and DLA Piper (€6.822m). These five firms account for most of the transaction value, highlighting the strong presence of international and local firms in the most significant transactions of the half-year.

In terms of number of transactions, the leadership changes and reflects the market strategy of the most active firms: Cuatrecasas (103 transactions), Garrigues (67), Pérez-Llorca (51), Uría Menéndez (49) and EY Abogados (27). The figures show that some firms prioritize a large volume of medium and small transactions, while others concentrate their activity on higher-value deals. Overall, these data paint a picture of the first half of 2025 in which the M&A market in Iberia has seen a slight decline in value, but a more significant decline in the number of transactions, reflecting a context of strategic caution and a concentration of high-profile deals.

# Ontario Teachers' acquires Vitaldent for €1 billion



ARACELI SAENZ



ESTEBAN ARZA



FRANCISCO ALDAVERO

The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan Board (OTPP), one of the world's largest pension funds with CAD 266.3 billion in assets under management, has reached an agreement to acquire 100% of Donte Group, the Spanish dental care platform best known for its flagship brand, Vitaldent. The transaction, which includes debt, values the group at over €1 billion and was signed in partnership with Donte's management team. The deal marks a major step in Ontario Teachers' strategic expansion into European healthcare services. The transaction is expected to close later this year, pending regulatory approvals and customary closing conditions.

## Advisors

The deal was supported by several leading advisors. Ontario Teachers' received legal counsel from Linklaters. The team was formed by **Esteban Arza** (partner), **Elena Rodríguez Fernández** (counsel), **Ben Rodham**, **Oliver Sceales** and **Genna Marten**.

Garrigues advised Advent International, the seller. EY Abogados acted as tax advisor to Advent. The team was formed by **Araceli Saenz** (partner) and **Adolfo Alcon** (manager).

Meanwhile, the management of Donte Group was advised by **Pinsent Masons**, with **Francisco Aldavero** (partner) and **Rocío García-Nardiz** (associate) leading the team.

## PRACTICE AREA

M&A

## TRANSACTION

Ontario Teachers' acquires Vitaldent for €1 billion

## FIRMS

Linklaters, Garrigues, EY Abogados and Pinsent Masons

## ADVISORS

Esteban Arza (Linklaters), Araceli Sáenz (EY Abogados) and Francisco Aldavero (Pinsent Masons)

## VALUE

€1b

# MasOrange, Vodafone, and GIC create Spain's largest fiber optic company



CARMEN BURGOS



FEDERICO ROIG



SEBASTIÁN ALBELLA

MasOrange, Vodafone Spain, and GIC have signed an agreement to create a fiber optic company in Spain (FibreCo). Under the terms of the agreement, the parties will have the following approximate shareholdings: MasOrange 58%, Vodafone Spain 17%, and GIC 25%.

MasOrange and Vodafone Spain will jointly contribute some 12 million real estate units and nearly 5 million customers to the new fiber network joint venture. The network will be dedicated exclusively to both operators, which will also continue to maintain and operate the infrastructure that each has contributed to FibreCo. As part of the transaction, MasOrange will acquire Conexus Networks, the wholesale provider of FTTH access in northern Spain, and will contribute it to FibreCo.

## Advisors

Cuatrecasas advised Vodafone with a team consisting of partner **Federico Roig**, senior associate **Pedro López-Dóriga**, and **Pablo del Moral** (Corporate M&A); partner **Irene Moreno-Tapia** and **Paula Wignall** (Competition); and partner **Enrique Carrera**, **Julene Areitio**, and **Mario Mas** (Competition and Foreign Direct Investment).

Linklaters advised MasOrange. The team was led by corporate partners **Sebastián Albella Amigo** and **Carmen Burgos**, and managing associate **Celso Méndez**, with significant involvement from the tax team (led by partner **Javier García-Pita Ripollés** and associate **Marta España Boronat**) and the competition team (led by **Fredrik Löwhagen**).

## PRACTICE AREA:

Project finance

## TRANSACTION:

MasOrange, Vodafone, and GIC create Spain's largest fiber optic company

## FIRMS:

Cuatrecasas and Linklaters

## ADVISORS:

Federico Roig (Cuatrecasas), Sebastián Albella Amigo (Linklaters) and Carmen Burgos (Linklaters).



## Opdenergy acquires €530m wind assets from Acciona



DÍDAC SEVERINO



JUANJO CORRAL MORENO



JULIO LUJAMBIO



RICARDO VALENCIA

Opdenergy, an independent renewable energy producer, announced today the acquisition from Acciona Energía of a portfolio of operational wind assets with a total capacity of 440 MW, distributed across 13 wind farms located in Albacete, Cádiz, Cuenca, Lérida, Valencia, and Zamora. The transaction is expected to close by the end of the year, following the obtaining of the corresponding regulatory approvals.

The transaction, valued at more than €500 million, is expected to close at the end of the year, subject to the necessary regulatory approvals.

With this acquisition, the company, whose majority shareholder is Antin Infrastructure Partners, will reach an operational capacity of 2.4 GW, with 80% of its assets located in Europe and the United States. More than 75% of revenues are obtained through long-term power purchase agreements (PPAs), which helps to ensure financial stability and predictability. Opdenergy remains focused on its expansion as an Independent Power Producer (IPP), deploying renewable assets to strengthen its global presence and be a key player in the global energy transition.

The agreement also includes a portfolio of photovoltaic projects under development of up to 351 MWp, associated with the potential for hybridization of wind farms.

## Advisors

Pérez-Llorca has advised Opdenenergy. In the Corporate area, the team is made up of partners Julio Lujambio and **Dídac Severino**, together with lawyers **Ignacio Mozo**, **Jaime Pérez Torroja**, and **Andrés Castiglioni**. In Regulatory, partner **Ana Cremades** and lawyers **Belén Wert**, **Lorenzo Morejón**, **Marta Sancho**, and **Bárbara Gómez** are working on the case. The Real Estate department includes partner **Florence Legeay** and lawyers **Cèlia Roig**, **Claudia Rubio**, **Helena Guillén**, **Helena Solé-Boet**, **Juan Oria de Rueda**, **Martín Arau**, **Carlota Martín**, and **Antoni Gómez**. In the Insurance and Reinsurance area, partner **Rafael Fernández** and lawyer **Boris Urquizu** are involved. The Labor, Compensation, and Benefits practice is represented by partner **Isabel Moya**. Counsel **Antoni Companys** and lawyer **Rafael Pastor** are involved in the Environment practice. Finally, the Antitrust practice is made up of partner **Jaime de Blas** and lawyer **Ane Corrales**.

KPMG Abogados also advised Opdenenergy with a team formed by **Ricardo Valencia** (Tax Director) and **Jaime de Miguel** (Tax Associate).

Baker Mckenzie has advised Acciona with a team formed by **Juanjo Corral Moreno** (partner), **Pablo García Canosa** (senior associate) and **Isabel Rodríguez** (mid-level associate).

## PRACTICE AREA:

M&A

## TRANSACTION:

Opdenenergy acquires €530m wind assets from Acciona

## FIRMS:

Pérez-Llorca, KPMG Abogados and Baker McKenzie

## ADVISORS:

Julio Lujambio (Pérez-Llorca), Dídac Severino (Pérez-Llorca), Ricardo Valencia (KPMG Abogados) and Juanjo Corral Moreno (Baker McKenzie)

## VALUE:

€530m

## Portugal signs €2.3b high-speed rail concession



MAFALDA FERREIRA



MARIA CASTELOS



MARIA ZAGALLO



PAULO DE BARROS BAPTISTA



PEDRO SIZA VIEIRA



TERESA EMPIS FALCÃO

On July 29, 2025, the concession contract was signed for the construction, financing, and operation of the first section of the new high-speed rail line that will connect Porto with Oia. This project, developed under the public-private partnership (PPP) model, represents a total investment of €2.3 billion and marks the largest project finance operation in Portugal's history.

The highly complex financing model, structured in line with international best practices, was secured by the European Investment Bank (EIB) alongside a diverse group of institutional investors, commercial banks, and insurance companies. These included Portuguese banks such as Novo Banco, Millennium BCP, Caixa Geral de Depósitos, and Caixa BI; international institutions such as Natixis Corporate & Investment Banking, BBVA, La Banque Postale, and Deutsche Bank; and insurance companies including Canada Life, Metlife, Manulife, MEAG, and LBPAM. For many of these institutions, this marks their first investment in the Portuguese infrastructure sector.

In the legal field, the promoters were advised by the firms CS'Associados and Vieira de Almeida (VdA), whose involvement spanned all phases of the project, from the preparation and submission of the tender proposal to the structuring and negotiation of an extensive contractual package that included more than 60 different agreements.

At VdA, the advice was led by partners **Paulo de Barros Baptista** and **Teresa Empis Falcão**, with the participation of partners **Ricardo Bordalo Junqueiro**, **André Gaspar Martins**, and **Francisco Cabral Matos**, as well as associates **Inês Perestrello**, **Beatriz Pereira da Silva**, **Vanessa Cardoso Pires**, **Rita Costa Lima**, and **Pedro Costa Cabral**. On behalf of CS'Associados, the advisory services were led by partners **Maria Castelos** and **Mafalda Ferreira**, with the main collaboration of **Nuno Saldanha de Azevedo** and **João da Costa Cabral Tomás**, and with the participation of **André Salgado de Matos**, **Gonçalo Machado Borges**, **Filipa Veiga Gomes**, **Marta Ramalho Gomes**, **Mariana Silva Pereira**, **Filipe Rocha**, and **Joana Alves Trindade**.

The financiers were advised by PLMJ on Portuguese law and by Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer (HSF Kramer) on English law. The European Investment Bank also received independent advice from Linklaters.

The PLMJ team was led by **Pedro Siza Vieira**, partner in the Banking, Finance and Capital Markets practice, together with **Maria Zagallo**, partner in the Public Law practice. **Luis Miguel Vasconcelos**, coordinating associate in the Banking and Finance department, and **Pedro de Almeida Fernandes**, associate in the same department, also participated in the transaction. Lawyers from the Corporate/M&A and Tax departments also collaborated on the transaction.

#### **PRACTICE AREA:**

Project finance

#### **TRANSACTION:**

Portugal signs €2.3B high-speed rail concession: Advisors

#### **FIRMS:**

CS'Associados, Vieira de Almeida (VdA), PLMJ, HSF Kramer, Linklaters

#### **ADVISORS:**

Paulo de Barros Baptista (VdA), Teresa Empis Falcão (VdA), Maria Castelos (CS'Associados), Mafalda Ferreira (CS'Associados), Pedro Siza Vieira (PLMJ) and Maria Zagallo (PLMJ)

#### **VALUE:**

€2.3b





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JOÃO ANDRÉ ANTUNES, ANDRÉ MIRANDA

# Fieldfisher targeting the top 10

**The British firm launches in Portugal with André Miranda  
Associados. Its goals: boost tech, hire top talent,  
and grow in key sectors**

by glória paiva

Fieldfisher arrived in Portugal on July 1st ([click here to read the news](#)) with a clear objective: to position itself among the top 10 law firms in the country. To achieve this, it chose André Miranda Associados (AMA) as its partner – a firm with which it shares values and ambitions. In 2024, AMA recorded a 20% increase in turnover – the same growth reported by Fieldfisher in Spain. The integration took place through AMA's offices in Lisbon and Porto, fully absorbing its structure of 68 professionals, including 45 lawyers. “We aim to be among the 10 most recognised law firms in Portugal and to sustain this pace of growth”, say managing partners **André Miranda** and **João André Antunes** interviewed by *Iberian Lawyer*.

The selection and negotiation process with the British firm lasted around two years and involved a detailed mapping of potential candidate firms, they explain. AMA was founded in 2014 through the combination of Miranda's experience in public law and Antunes' in corporate and M&A – both having worked at Cuatrecasas. Since then, the firm has invested in infrastructure, management and professionalisation, achieving remarkable growth in terms of revenue and professionals. Its recent move to a new headquarters in Avenidas Novas, Lisbon, reflects this evolution.

For Fieldfisher, which currently has 27 offices in 14 countries, expanding into Portugal was a logical move, explain André Miranda. The firm has expanded its European presence with recent openings in Austria, Italy and Poland, and has been operating in Spain since 2018. Portugal now emerges as a market with strong growth potential in sectors that are strategic for the network: innovation, technology, financial services and energy. “After the financial crisis of 2011, Portugal succeeded in attracting significant foreign investment and establishing itself as a dynamic economy. In addition, it serves as a platform for other geographies such as Africa, Asia and Brazil,” notes Miranda.

According to Miranda, integration into an international network comes at a strategic moment for both the economy and the legal sector in Portugal. “The market is becoming increasingly competitive — both in attracting clients and



**«Clients are increasingly well-prepared, which reduces our margin for differentiation. Working within a large organisation can make all the difference»**

**João André Antunes**

retaining talent. Joining a network of 1,800 lawyers was a natural next step after ten years”, he explains.

The alliance is built on a strong alignment of values and organisational culture. Both firms prioritise so-called “future-facing” areas, promote open and collaborative working environments, and invest in consolidating their internal identity. “We have a cohesive team, with a non-hierarchical structure and strong personal and professional closeness. We encourage autonomy from the internship stage”, says Miranda. “When we got to know Fieldfisher's reality, we realised there was a strong affinity between our DNAs.”

According to João André Antunes, joining the network will allow the Portuguese team to make a qualitative leap in several areas. Fieldfisher provides advanced technological tools, including the use of artificial intelligence to support legal work, document and knowledge management, as well as continuous training in various fields. Another key asset is the network's non-legal technical departments, which can be brought into highly complex and large-scale projects. Information security will also be enhanced, as will the international exchange of lawyers. "We'll have access to practices and tools that will enable us to take a significant step forward", says Antunes.

## AREAS OF EXPANSION

Over the past ten years, Miranda and Antunes' areas of practice have gained prominence in a firm that now operates as a full-service provider, with a particular focus on corporate, M&A, business support, litigation, public and regulatory law, and private clients. The latter has seen significant growth, driven by an increase in foreign investment in Portugal. Currently, around 45% of AMA's turnover comes from international clients across some 60 jurisdictions. "The integration with Fieldfisher will further enhance this network – and will also be boosted by it", believes Miranda.



**«We want to consolidate this structure so that, in future, other lawyers can continue to build on it and take over the leadership of the firm»**

**André Miranda**

## KEY AREAS

technology

financial  
services

energy  
& natural  
resources

life  
sciences



In this new phase, as the MPs explain, four key sectors will need to be strengthened at the Portuguese headquarters: energy, life sciences, financial services, and technology – areas where Portugal shows significant growth potential and which Fieldfisher prioritises in its international strategy. “We already have some experience in these fields, but it will be necessary to strengthen the teams if the workload increases as we expect”, Antunes admits. New hires are therefore expected in the short term, as well as an expansion of the equity partnership, which currently consists of the two managing partners.

For Antunes, lawyers will play a crucial role in the green and digital transition of businesses. “Clients are increasingly well-prepared and demanding, which reduces our margin for differentiation. That’s why working within a structure with this level of technological capability can make all the difference”, he stresses.

According to Miranda, the alliance marks only the beginning of a journey with strong growth potential. To achieve the goal of joining the ranks of the ten most recognised law firms in Portugal, plans include strengthening the team, improving remuneration, diversifying practice areas and attracting new clients. “We want to

## FIELDFISHER IN NUMBERS

**27**

European offices

**14**

Countries

**1,800**

Lawyers

**2,200**


People

**68**

Professionals in Portugal

**2**

Offices in Lisbon and Porto

consolidate this structure so that, in future, other lawyers can continue to build on it and take over the leadership of the firm. Being part of an international network makes that goal much more tangible”, he concludes. 



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# The legaltech shift

No longer optional, AI tools are already reshaping everyday legal practice as law firms and startup developers bring innovation to the ground

by glória paiva

The technological revolution has become a central concern in the legal sector. The question is no longer *if* artificial intelligence should be adopted, but *when* — and how fast. There's growing consensus that technology now plays a decisive role in the success or failure of a law firm. Tools that improve efficiency, reduce costs, automate tasks, and enable predictive analytics are driving the growth of the legaltech AI market, as firms respond to rising pressure for agile, data-driven solutions.

The global legaltech market was valued at USD 2.5 billion in 2024 and is forecast to reach USD 8.5 billion by 2031, according to Market Research Intellect. Fuelled by product innovation, cross-sector application, sustainability goals and growing investor interest, the market is led by North America (over 40% share) and Europe (30%), according to Cognitive Market Research. In Portugal, the industry is still in its early stages, with just over a dozen consolidated companies focused exclusively on legal solutions, according to Abreu Advogados.

Still, momentum is building. According to **Marisa Borsboom**, co-founder of the International Alliance of Lawtechs and Legal Innovation (AI2L), the sector has entered a boom phase after years of groundwork by “pioneers and dreamers”. “We used to talk about disruption, innovation, revolution. Now it's time to rethink, reimagine, and restructure”, she says. One of the clearest signs of that shift is the increasing collaboration between major law firms and startups, such as the Portuguese Legau – which works with clients like PLMJ, Antas da Cunha Ecija, and CCA Law Firm – and the Swedish Legora, which has been developing solutions alongside Morais Leitão ([click to read](#)) and Pérez-Llorca.

## THIRSTY FOR INNOVATION

In Southern Europe, firms are moving from hesitation to action. “Both in Portugal and Spain, forward-thinking teams are embracing AI to drive efficiency and gain a competitive edge”, says **Axel Junestrand**, founding GTM



«We need hybrid profiles – engineers who understand law, and lawyers who understand tech»

**André Dionísio**



«We're only just scratching the surface of what these models are capable of»

**Axel Junestrand**



«More than tools, we need critical thinking and the integration of technology with legal values»

**Marisa Borsboom**



«That is something we consider essential: bringing some lightness to the legal world»

**Luís Alves Dias**

lead for Iberia and LatAm at Legora. He highlights strong demand in areas where accuracy and scalability are critical— especially in automating routine tasks that previously kept lawyers from higher-value work. “This is where AI delivers immediate value, by taking over the repetitive work and enabling lawyers to concentrate on strategic, client-facing tasks”, he notes.

After spending six months observing the daily work at Sérvulo & Associados, **André Dionísio**, co-founder and CEO of ByTheLaw, and his team identified internal knowledge management as a key bottleneck. The company developed, then, an AI-based system that automatically organises internal legal information, reducing time spent on non-billable admin. “Knowledge is the most valuable asset for law firms”, says Dionísio.

Having worked as a lawyer, **Luís Alves Dias**, CEO and co-founder at Legau, also saw the need to improve efficiency. Its platform helps legal teams draft, review, and translate documents, integrating directly with firms’ internal systems. The startup reports time savings of 22.1% per lawyer on drafting tasks, roughly seven hours per week, and say 75% of lawyers using the platform say they “feel better about their work.” “That is something we consider essential: bringing some lightness to the legal world”, says Dias. ByTheLaw estimates its tool currently saves 63 hours per user annually — a number the company believes it can multiply by up to ten in the coming years.

## CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

Despite growing adoption, the legaltech sector can face structural challenges. Regulatory complexity — including uncertainty around the upcoming EU AI Act — is one concern. Others include, specifically in Portugal, rigid labour frameworks, tax issues, a limited talent pool, and a lack of clarity around the national regulatory environment. “The Portuguese Bar Association could take a more open and



proactive role in this sense”, suggests Luís Alves Dias.

Another gap is the judiciary’s slow pace of digitalisation. “Search engines and tools used in the public sector and courts are so outdated that professionals often end up using Google”, observes Dionísio. He calls for more dialogue between law and engineering. “We need hybrid profiles – engineers who understand law, and lawyers who understand tech.”

For Borsboom, the situation is more urgent: she believes most of legaltech startups will fail unless there’s a shift in approach. Beyond funding and judicial integration, she adds, the sector needs to be guided by legal values: justice, data sovereignty, interoperability, and critical thinking. “More than tools, we need critical thinking and the integration of technology with legal values”, she argues.

## THE LEGALTECH AI MARKET

**USD 2.5 billion worldwide in 2024**

**USD 8.5 billion expected to grow by 2031**

**15.2% CAGR from 2025 to 2031**

Source: Market Research Intellect

## LOOKING BEYOND BORDERS

For smaller and mid-sized markets like Portugal, international expansion is increasingly seen as the path forward. Legau are already looking abroad, with plans to enter the US market ([click to read](#)). ByTheLaw is developing solutions adaptable to other legal systems and sees particular opportunity in Portuguese-speaking countries such as Brazil. The goal, says Dionísio, is to work with international partners to validate their tools locally.

Despite the hurdles, the outlook is optimistic. As AI capabilities evolve and become more aligned with legal work, a new wave of innovation is expected to reshape the landscape across Southern Europe. “The potential is huge. We’re only just scratching the surface of what these models are capable of”, says Junestrand. 

### What AI legal technologies can do today?

- Automate workflows and tasks
- Analyse and review contracts
- Inspect legal documents
- Conduct legal and case law research
- Support e-discovery processes
- Generate predictive analytics
- Offer legal SaaS solutions
- Automate compliance checks
- Assess legal risks
- Manage documents and knowledge
- Assist with legal drafting
- Guide clients via legal chatbots

Sources: Cognitive Market Research, Abreu Advogados

## REWRITING LEGAL TRAINING

Another emerging niche within legaltech is learning and development. Law firms spend thousands of euros and countless hours each year on training, onboarding, and legal updates for their teams. Spotting a gap in this area, **Francisco de Abreu Duarte**, legal scholar and lawyer, joined forces with **Norberto de Andrade**, a tech-policy expert, and **Gonçalo Carrilho**, formerly of Morais Leitão, to found Lexstream — a “legal edtech” with a mission to transform how legal knowledge is delivered.



FRANCISCO DE ABREU DUARTE

While researching law and technology, Duarte noticed that traditional education failed to engage younger generations. In response, his team developed a platform using ultra-realistic avatars — “digital twins” — of real lecturers. Where lawyers in leadership positions once spent 6–10 hours recording videos, they now spend just three minutes in real footaging, with digital twins delivering sharper, more concise content available in multiple languages. “As the law is constantly changing, lawyers gain access to up-to-date and straight-to-the-point information”, says Duarte.

One example of Lexstream’s application is Intellectual, a project with NLP Law Firm. In it, an avatar answers IP-related questions in clear, accessible language. “We want to raise awareness to help companies identify opportunities in key areas of intellectual property”, say NLP’s partners.

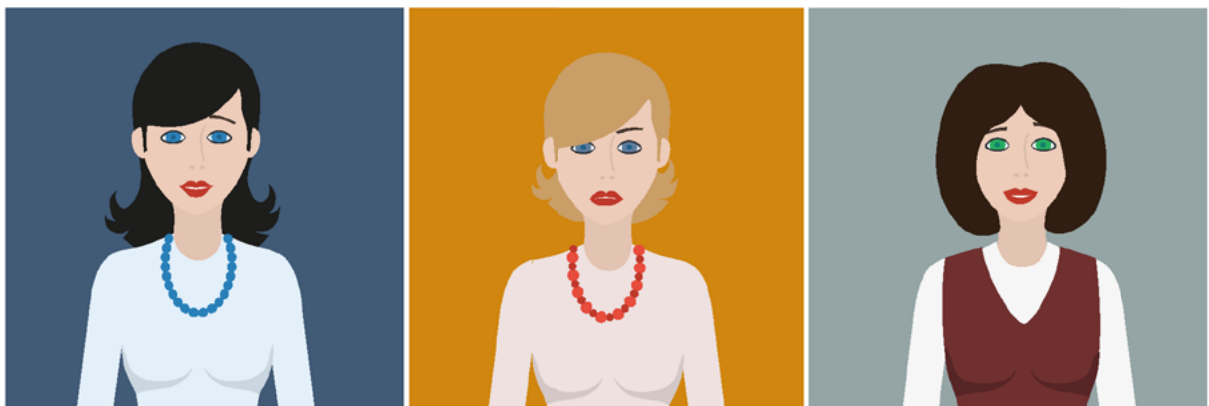
According to Duarte, clients will increasingly turn to AI-powered tools for basic tasks, putting pressure on law firms to cut costs. However, he believes the solution is not to replace humans entirely. “The human perspective is essential to avoid mistakes and ensure quality”, he says.





# Mujeres

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Info: [ilaria.iaquinta@iberianlegalgroup.com](mailto:ilaria.iaquinta@iberianlegalgroup.com)



A portrait of Bruno Ferreira, a middle-aged man with short dark hair, a grey beard, and black-rimmed glasses. He is wearing a dark blue suit jacket over a light blue button-down shirt. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a dark, textured grey. The entire image is framed by a thin red border.

# Bruno Ferreira to lead PLMJ for another three years

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In exclusive conversation with *Iberian Lawyer*, the managing partner reflects on innovation, strategic growth, and the firm's priorities in energy, technology, and defence

by glória paiva

PLMJ has confirmed that **Bruno Ferreira** will stay on as managing partner for another three years, alongside the current board of directors — a development revealed exclusively by *Iberian Lawyer*. The firm's management model appears to be delivering results: on the eve of its 60th anniversary, the Portuguese law firm continues to grow steadily, featuring in major transactions and litigation, strengthening its team, and making strategic integrations — such as Sofia Galvão Advogados in the urban planning area and RRP Advogados in the real estate sector.

With around 400 professionals, including 45 partners, across its offices in Lisbon, Porto and Faro, PLMJ is committed to an international presence through local partners, via the PLMJ Colab network in Mozambique and Angola, and also operates with contracted lawyers in jurisdictions such as Cape Verde. The firm supports both foreign clients in Portugal and domestic companies in their international expansion into countries such as the United Kingdom, Spain, Brazil and the United States.

In addition to leading the firm, Bruno Ferreira is a partner in the banking, finance and capital markets areas. To balance the intensity of his professional day-to-day, he relies on a simple ritual: “The time it takes me to leave the office and get home already allows me to switch off from work mode”, says the managing partner, who lives outside Lisbon. In his spare time, he dedicates himself to reading, family and music. He is currently learning the cello alongside his daughter, with whom he performs every three months. In this interview with *Iberian Lawyer*, he discusses PLMJ's strategic pillars, the sector's challenges and the firm's plans for the future.

**You've now been managing partner for five years, two of them alongside Luís Paes Antunes. What have been the main milestones of your leadership?**

Since 2009, the firm has undergone profound changes. We were already active in major deals, but we wanted to strengthen that position, which required a cultural shift, focusing on more strategic activities. The biggest challenge was mana-

**«Beyond the technical aspects, a significant part of our success as lawyers depends on relational skills»**

ging that internal transformation. Fortunately, the results followed — both in client perception and in the internal environment. We also tackled structural issues, such as adapting to artificial intelligence. It has been a continuous learning process, shared by the whole team.

**What has changed in your view of the legal profession since you took on the leadership role?**

The market was already sophisticated, partly due to regular work with major international firms. But we have seen a clear evolution on the demand side: today, in-house legal departments are stronger and staffed by highly qualified professionals, which challenges us to rise to the occasion — we need to make a difference compared to what clients can already do in-house or with other





alternative service providers. There's a saying that goes: "a lawyer is not always the answer to a legal problem." General counsels have already realised this — and it's up to us, more and more, to add value to our work.

**PLMJ has been very active in major real estate and M&A transactions. What has driven this trend?**

These are naturally more visible areas, but we have also grown significantly in litigation, especially class actions. The decisive factor is the quality of our lawyers, which builds trust and creates new opportunities. We have been betting on a sector-based approach, strengthening our capabilities in strategic sectors such as energy, infrastructure, real estate and finance.

**In recent years, PLMJ has made several hires and integrated other firms. What's next?**

For us, it is important to identify people and situa-

**«With AI transforming repetitive tasks, our added value will increasingly lie in empathy, reading contexts, and anticipating needs»**

tions aligned with our way of working. The arrival of Sofia Galvão and Ricardo Reigada, for example, strengthened areas already strong at PLMJ. Growth aims to consolidate what we already do well. As long as there is alignment with our culture, there are no limits. But we want to grow with rigour, maintaining quality and efficiency, with a focus on consolidating our representativeness.

**PLMJ embraces multidisciplinary**

Following the decision by the Portuguese Bar Association allowing lawyers to work in multidisciplinary firms, the Portuguese legal market has been gradually embracing this transformation. Among the Big Four, PwC Portugal, EY, and Deloitte have already included legal services, and KPMG has stated, in the Portuguese press, its intention to do the same. Among law firms, Morais Leitão was the first to appoint a non-legal partner, followed by Kgsa and PLMJ. In January, the law firm promoted **Daniela Amaral**, head of strategy & business development, and **Alexandra Almeida Ferreira**, head of branding and communication since 2020, to partners at PLMJ.

"This is a step that allows us to serve our clients in a more integrated way, responding to needs that they themselves have brought to us. These needs, while complementary to what is and will always remain the core of PLMJ — legal advisory — are ones we are in a privileged position to meet," the firm stated. According to PLMJ, its current management team brings a level of sophistication that enables closer collaboration with clients in areas that are often upstream or downstream of the firm's core legal work — and that require a level of trust already established within the legal advisory context. "We're thinking, for instance, of support with technology or crisis management," the firm explained.

With 20 years of experience in business development, marketing, research, M&A, private equity, corporate culture, and sustainability, Amaral served as research lead and head of marketing and business development at Freshfields before joining PLMJ in 2016. She has also held similar roles at S&P Capital IQ, Mexx, and other companies. Ferreira, who joined PLMJ in 2020, is a journalist specializing in external and internal communication, brand content, institutional communication, PR, and business development. She worked for 15 years as a journalist covering the economy, markets, and politics.

### **PLMJ is approaching its 60th anniversary. What has stayed the same and what has changed in the firm's culture?**

We maintain a strong spirit of independence and entrepreneurship. That's in our DNA. But today we are a more professionalised organisation, with a management structure that follows the standards of large professional services firms. One of our goals was a major upgrade of the management team, and that leap has been essential for the firm's development.

### **What are the practice areas of the future?**

Energy will continue to be central, as will projects and infrastructure, due to the scale of public investment. Technology is inevitable. We are also investing in emerging areas such as defence, and in industrial sectors linked to the reconfiguration of the European production chain, such as the automotive industry, where Portugal plays a significant role.

### **How has PLMJ been incorporating innovation and technology?**

We were already working on this, but the arrival of generative AI surprised everyone. Having a tool that seems to "think like a human" triggered a genuine wave of innovation. We are working on four fronts: ongoing internal training; monitoring and testing new tools; partnerships with clients and suppliers; and a permanent strategic reflection on the impact of technology on our services, on client relations and on internal structures. This is, in fact, one of our key strategic priorities.

### **How do you approach attracting and retaining talent?**

We try to understand what motivates each person. Law is a demanding profession, but one that offers great fulfilment. And we've been fortunate in recruiting people who identify with our vision. We foster an environment of constant improvement, with ongoing training, without losing focus on client needs. We want people to feel professionally fulfilled — and, if they eventually move on, to leave with valuable knowledge and meaningful experiences. That's why we invest in training, induction cycles and other tools that go beyond financial compensation.

## **PLMJ IN NUMBERS**

**1967**

Foundation in Lisbon

**400**

Professionals

**45**

Partners

**5**

Offices (Lisbon, Porto, Faro, Angola, Mozambique)

### **What have you learned in practice that books or university didn't teach you?**

That beyond the technical aspects, a significant part of our success as lawyers depends on relational skills. Understanding fears, needs, and even what the client doesn't yet realise they need — that's not taught at university. Another important lesson, in the role of a leader, is the importance of communication, especially with the partners. And with AI transforming repetitive tasks, our added value will increasingly lie in empathy, reading contexts, and anticipating needs. That's where we must continue to make a difference. ■

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# NextGen in-house lawyers 2025

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A new generation of in-house lawyers:  
the young talents redefining corporate legal counsel in the Iberian Peninsula

by ilaria laquinta and gloria paiva



They are the emerging leaders of Iberian in-house law: a new generation of corporate lawyers emerging with purpose, poised to shape the future of legal advisory services in Spain and Portugal. While many are still in their thirties—and others have only just turned forty—their impact on the market is already undeniable. These are professionals with a robust legal background, forged in high-pressure environments, who have earned the trust of their teams, senior management, and even the more established legal sector.

Their names have been discreetly recommended by partners at leading law firms and senior general counsel, in off-the-record conversations, as talents who are already making a difference within their organisations. Some are heading up entire legal departments; others, working within larger teams, stand out for their initiative, technical rigour, and ability to anticipate risks through a strategic, cross-functional lens.

This generational shift is not merely a matter of age. In a landscape shaped by regulatory pressure, digital transformation, compliance, and sustainability, these lawyers are stepping into a new kind of prominence. They bring agility, critical thinking, tech fluency, and a business acumen that goes far beyond the strictly legal. Rather than replicating inherited models, they are redefining the role of the in-house lawyer with new language, tools, and priorities.

What follows is a selection of young in-house lawyers making their mark on the Iberian legal scene. This is not a ranking or league table, but a qualitative recognition based on market observation and the editorial judgement of *Iberian Lawyer*.

The profiles are listed alphabetically and by country. ■



# PORTUGAL



**Natália Galvão Veiga Rebelo**  
Country legal manager, Ikea Portugal

With a background in in-house roles, including at Lidl and Portugal Telecom, she has experience in compliance, risk and consumer law. At Ikea, she is involved in projects related to logistics automation and sustainability, providing guidance on licensing, contracts, and due diligence. She also serves as a mentor for diversity in the workplace. She is a board member at INGKA Centres Portugal and an academic researcher at Nova School of Law.

She has been involved in operations such as the takeover bid for the Finnish group Musti, the acquisition of BCF Life Sciences, and the implementation of the CSRD. Her team addresses challenges related to emerging regulations in ESG, AI, antitrust, and cybersecurity, as the group operates across a wide range of sectors. She is also part of the company's board secretariat.



**Ana Raquel Mendonça**  
Legal advisor, Sonae

She oversees regulatory compliance matters, crime risk management, and sanctions control. She also acts as chief risk and compliance officer, head of anti-money laundering, and head of sanctions. Previously, Mota held compliance management roles at Norgarante, Itaú Private Bank Zurich, and BNP Paribas, bringing together international experience with specialization in compliance and anti-fraud.



**Ana Catarina Mota**  
Chief compliance officer and vice-president, Citi Portugal

Working within the legal team led by Manuela Simões, she has been involved in managing the airline's litigation portfolio and shaping its compliance policies. She participated in operations such as fleet financing, high-yield bond issuances, the restructuring plan, and preparations for the company's privatization. She previously spent ten years at Cuatrecasas, specializing in corporate law and litigation.



**Carolina Mouraz**  
Head of litigation and compliance director  
TAP Air Portugal



**Gonçalo Ventura**

Executive board member, chief corporate officer, and head of legal, Grupo Manuel Champalimaud

He is responsible for legal structuring, compliance, and managing legal risks across the group's operations. With experience in the corporate and construction sectors, he has served as general counsel and head of compliance at companies like Steconfer, Aquaterra and Capgemini. He also worked as in-house lawyer at Odebrecht in Mozambique, building international expertise in public and private contracting, compliance, and risk management.

# SPAIN

She advises Twist Bioscience on contractual, privacy and intellectual property matters across the EMEA and APAC regions. Prior to joining the US-based biotech company, she was a principal associate at Cuatrecasas and served as in-house counsel (seconded) at Nike and Crédit Mutuel. A specialist in digital law, artificial intelligence and data protection, she also lectures at institutions such as ESADE, Barcelona Technology School and EBIS.



**Paula Álvarez**

Commercial counsel EMEA and APAC  
Twist Bioscience



**Lucía Blasco Cué**

General counsel EMEA, Ferroglobe

She leads the legal function for the EMEA region at Ferroglobe, one of the world's largest producers of silicon metal and ferroalloys. She has been involved in complex M&A transactions, IPOs and divestments with regulatory components across multiple jurisdictions. Her remit also includes key areas such as corporate governance, compliance and entity management in over ten countries. She is also an active member of Women in a Legal World.



Still under 40, she serves as head of legal and is also a partner at Nazca Capital — a rare combination in Spain's private equity sector, particularly among legal professionals. She leads on complex transactions, investor relations and the negotiation of LPAs. Her influence goes well beyond the legal sphere: she sits on the investment committee, holds a seat on the board of directors, and chairs the firm's ESG committee.



**Catalina Chalbaud**

Partner, head of legal and ESG responsible  
Nazca Capital



**Claudia Compte Cutropia**

Chief legal officer Iberia and secretary to the board  
Grupo IskayPet

At just 35, she leads the legal function at Grupo IskayPet, a leading player in the Iberian PetCare sector, and manages a team of 18 professionals. She also serves as secretary to the board of directors, its executive committee and delegated committee, and is co-sponsor of the ESG Committee. Her profile combines legal expertise, business acumen and a recognised ability to lead with closeness in fast-growing environments. She also serves as vice-president of AEDPAC, the Spanish pet industry association.

He manages complex cross-border litigation for HP, with a focus on competition law, intellectual property and commercial disputes across Southern Europe, the Middle East and Africa. He has also provided legal support for global programmes such as anti-counterfeiting and corporate separation processes. Alongside his in-house role, he lectures at the Escuela de Práctica Jurídica (UCM) and has contributed to internationally recognised pro bono initiatives.



**Felix Fernandez-Hinojal**

Litigation manager (Southern Europe, Middle East & Africa) & competition counsel, HP



**Manuela González-Arias**

General counsel, Asterion Industrial Partners

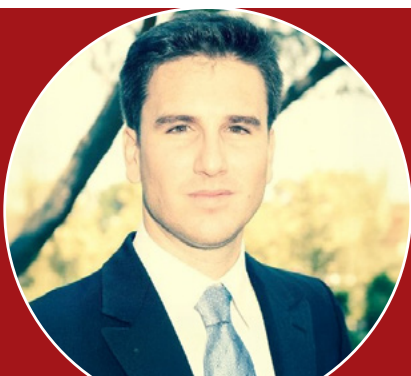
Since 2018, she has led the legal function at Asterion Industrial Partners, a pan-European infrastructure investment firm. She has over 13 years of experience in complex M&A, private equity and capital markets transactions. Prior to joining Asterion at its inception, she was a managing associate at Linklaters (Madrid) and an associate at Simpson Thacher & Bartlett (London), and also worked at Freshfields, Clifford Chance and Cleary Gottlieb.



He leads the global transfer pricing function at Iberdrola, where he defines and implements the group's international tax policies. His career includes a nine-year tenure at EY, with experience in both Madrid and Houston. Specialised in the energy sector, he is involved in corporate restructurings, project financing, intangible asset management and the automation of tax processes. He also advises on M&A transactions, intercompany financing pricing and joint venture structuring.



**Jaime Linaza Giménez-Cassina**  
Head of global transfer pricing, Iberdrola



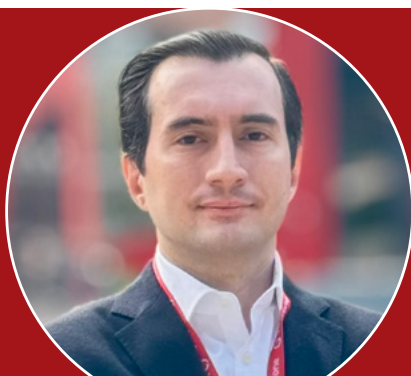
**Álvaro Machuca Menéndez**  
In-house counsel, M&A department  
Banco Santander

In just four years within Banco Santander's M&A department, he has become a key figure in the bank's corporate legal team. Although he does not hold a formal leadership title, he is regarded as the second-in-command in the practice led by Paloma Alfonso Avello. Market sources highlight his strong technical skills, empathy and leadership ability — qualities that mark him out as a rising talent in the in-house landscape.

He joined Grupo DIA in 2020 as deputy general counsel, following previous roles at leading firms such as Allen & Overy, Deloitte and KPMG. Since 2023, he has led the group's legal department and, as of January 2025, also serves as Secretary to the board of directors. With a career both rapid and robust, he has been involved in the group's most strategic transactions in recent years, including refinancing processes, corporate governance reforms and organisational restructurings.



**Patricio Morenés Hoyos**  
General counsel and secretary to the board, Grupo DIA



**Miguel Romera**  
Director of corporate legal affairs, compliance and risk, Vodafone Spain

He leads a key legal area in the midst of strategic transformation. With prior experience at Hispasat, Indra and leading law firms, over the past year he has been involved in M&A transactions worth over €15 billion and in the creation of two major fibre joint ventures in partnership with Telefónica and MasOrange. In addition to heading a lean, agile team, he oversees the compliance and risk functions, reporting both to the company's general secretary and to Zegona's audit committee.

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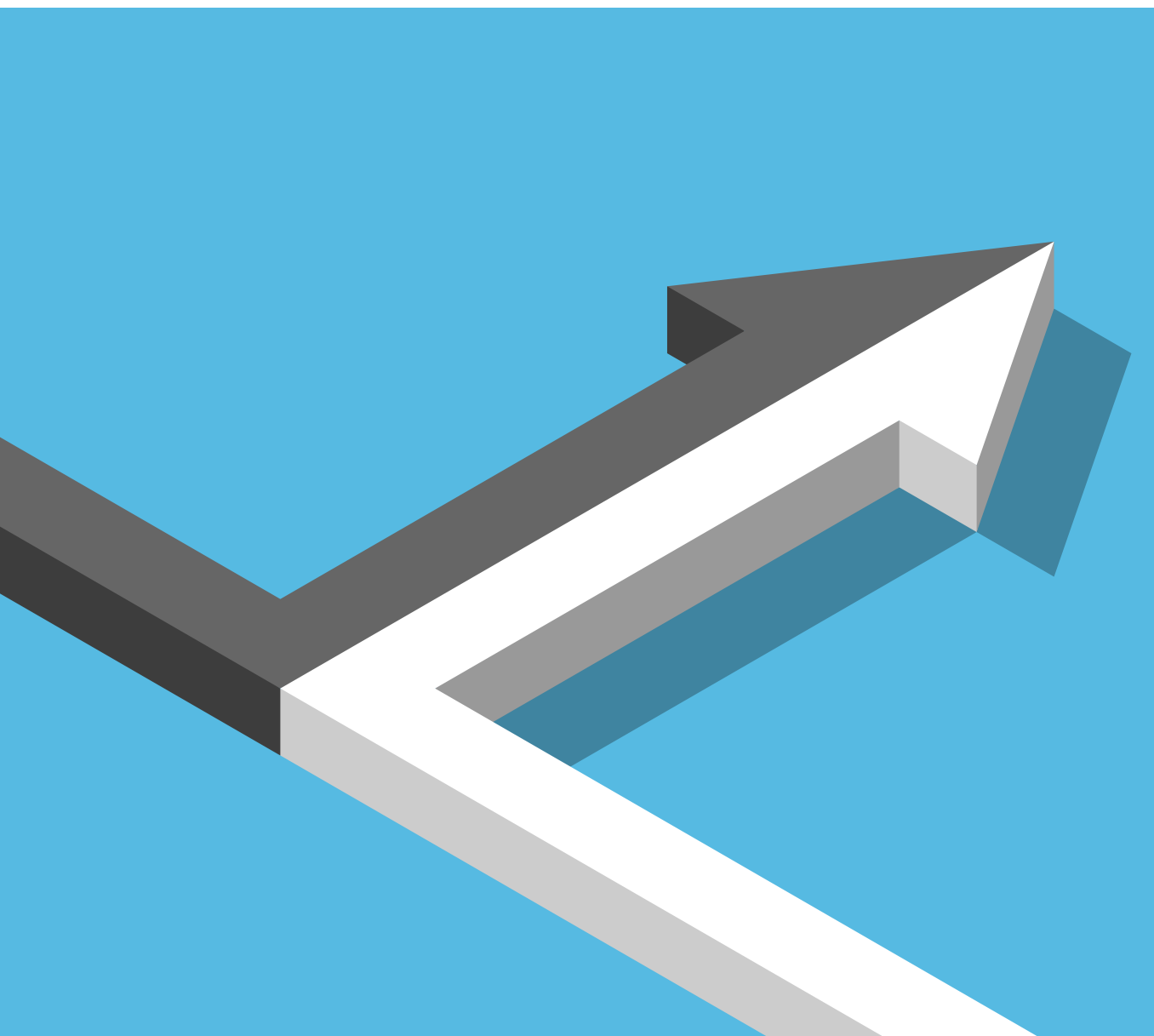
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# The revival of M&A

San Miguel (Uría), Del Val (A&O Shearman), Cuesta (Montero Aramburu), González Mosqueira (Pérez-Llorca) and Correig (Cuatrecasas) agree: the second half of the year points to a revival of M&A

by julia gil



With September already underway, the mergers and acquisitions (M&A) market is facing the second half of 2025 with a subdued but optimistic tone. Although the first half of the year closed with 419 transactions — 34.94% less than in 2024 — and an aggregate value of €87.134 billion, according to Mergermarket's global and regional M&A ranking for the first half of 2025, the perception among law firms is that the turnaround had been brewing for months. Leading M&A lawyers **Francisco San Miguel**, partner in the corporate department at Uría Menéndez; **Íñigo del Val**, partner in charge of corporate and M&A at A&O Shearman; **Miguel Cuesta**, partner in the corporate department at Montero Aramburu & Gómez-Villares Atencia, **Pablo González Mosqueira**, corporate partner at Pérez-Llorca, and **Gerard Correig**, corporate partner at Cuatrecasas, with whom *Iberian Lawyer* has spoken, all agree that the first signs of recovery began to be noticed before the summer.

“June and July have been very active”, says del Val. San Miguel from Uría is even more emphatic: “The recovery has already happened”. Even so, the recovery is not uniform or without obstacles: processes are moving forward, but they are doing so with greater caution, more complex structures and longer deadlines. The trend, according to the firms, is towards a more buoyant end to the financial year, although it is still marked by certain legal, regulatory and macroeconomic tensions.

In parallel with the recovery in activity, the dynamics of negotiation are also changing. As a result of the new balance of power, the buyer has gained weight at the negotiating table. Consequently, contracts reflect a trend towards structures that are more favourable to their position. “The representations and liability regime are broader; there is less risk-taking on the part of the buyer at closing, and there is more price adjustment than locked box than before,” explains Del Val. Added to this is a change in the type of negotiation: bilateral transactions, with less competition in the final stages, have gained prominence. However, this does not imply an abuse of dominant position. “When an investor wants an asset now, they do not take advantage



FRANCISCO SAN MIGUEL

of the circumstances to obtain better legal terms,” he clarifies, but rather tend to facilitate the signing when they detect that their offer is the only one or the most attractive.

## NEW MECHANISMS

In this context, risk management mechanisms have become more complex and creative. Cuatrecasas partner Gerard Correig points out that “those parties that best adapt to this scenario and propose variable pricing mechanisms, earn-outs, contingent pricing or others are more likely to move forward with transactions.” These are techniques that seek to spread the risks arising from economic

## M&A RANKING SPAIN FIRST HALF OF 2025 (MERGERMARKET)

According to the global and regional M&A ranking compiled by Mergermarket, in Spain, the firm that leads in terms of value of transactions advised in the first half of the year is Uría Menéndez, with a total of approximately €13.1 billion. It is followed by A&O Shearman with €7.458 billion and Greenberg Traurig with €7.304 billion. In terms of number of transactions, the top three positions are held by Cuatrecasas (92 transactions), Garrigues (64) and Pérez-Llorca (49).

Ranking	Lawfirm	Value (EUR M)
1	Uría Menéndez	13.100
2	A&O Shearman	7.458
3	Greenberg Traurig	7.304
4	Rymarz Zdort Maruta	7.025
5	Garrigues	5.844

Source: Ranking by transaction value. Mergermarket. Global and regional M&A ranking for the first half of 2025. Currency conversion based on the exchange rate in effect on 1 August 2025.

Ranking	Lawfirm	Value (EUR M)
1	Cuatrecasas	92
2	Garrigues	64
3	Pérez-Llorca	49
4	Uría Menéndez	46
5	Gómez-Acebo & Pombo	25

Source: Ranking by number of transactions. Mergermarket. Global and regional M&A ranking for the first half of 2025.

or regulatory volatility. In addition, clauses seeking to protect against sudden changes in the economic conditions of the agreement, such as MAC (material adverse change) clauses, are reappearing. "Significant tariff changes could be covered by these regulations in companies that are highly exposed to them," Correig points out. However, Uría Menéndez warns that this type of clause cannot yet be considered widespread: "It is not a trend that we are seeing," clarifies San Miguel, although he does recognise its usefulness



IÑIGO DEL VAL

in very specific geopolitical contexts, such as in Eastern Europe.

At the same time, legal uncertainty, interest rates and political instability have led to delays in closing dates. Miguel Cuesta, partner at Montero Aramburu & Gómez-Villares Atencia, observes that "transactions that initially had to be closed in three or four months are being delayed beyond six months and are even failing to be formalised". In response to this, flexibility is essential. Thus, the extension of longstop dates has become a frequent solution. "Both investors and recipients of the investment prefer to extend the dates for compliance with these conditions precedent



GERARD CORREIG

rather than initiate a new procedure that, in the long run, may also be delayed,” explains Cuesta.

Although the number of transactions has decreased in the first half of the year, the value of some of them has remained the same or even increased, suggesting greater specialisation on the part of investors. Firms such as Montero Aramburu & Gómez-Villares Atencia are seeing dynamism in sectors such as healthcare (along with pharmaceuticals), education and real estate. “Many funds have focused on the education sector, carrying out significant transactions at all levels: universities, schools, distance learning, etc.,” says Cuesta. Meanwhile, the hotel sector continues to attract interest, especially in

## M&A IN SPAIN COMPARISON OF THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2024-2025

Transactions in IH25: 419  
Transactions in IH24: 644  
Change in number of transactions: -34.94%  
Aggregate value IH25: €87,134 million  
Aggregate value IH24: €109,364 million  
Change in transaction value: -20.33%

*Source: Mergermarket. Global and regional M&A ranking for the first half of 2025. Currency conversion based on the exchange rate in effect on 1 August 2025.*

locations such as Malaga and the Canary Islands, even though others, such as logistics, present doubts due to their high level of regulation. Likewise, in the mid-market, security of execution is decisive. “The certainty of execution by the buyer (certain financial availability and no need for regulatory authorisations) is key for sellers, as is the buyer's acceptance of a sale with no post-closing liabilities, or with clearly limited liabilities (in terms of amount and time),” emphasises San Miguel.

## FOREIGN INVESTMENT

The decline in international transactions in the first six months of the year is not interpreted as a structural lack of interest. “We perceive more caution than reluctance,” points out Pablo González Mosqueira, partner at Pérez-Llorca. In his opinion, Spain remains attractive due to its macroeconomic fundamentals, although investors are taking more time in their evaluations. “In general, we are seeing transactions that continue to move forward, albeit with longer processes and more sophisticated structures that seek to mitigate risks,” he emphasises.

Furthermore, although the legal structures of inbound deals (foreign investors in Spain) and outbound deals (Spanish companies buying abroad) are similar, regulatory fragmentation and growing protectionism require a case-by-case analysis. “It requires analysing each country individually, with the support of specialised local teams, the requirements, deadlines and possible regulatory conditions, foreign investment






PABLO GONZÁLEZ MOSQUEIRA

controls and competition in each jurisdiction,” explains González Mosqueira.

## EXPECTATIONS

The picture painted by the first half of 2025 is not that of a frenetic market, but neither is it one of a dormant cycle. “We expect the sector to take off again in the last quarter,” says Cuesta. Law firms are observing a clear change in trend, although this is tempered by a still demanding environment. “The lack of stability and legal certainty in all areas is slowing down and hindering operations,” acknowledges the partner at Montero Aramburu. González Mosqueira

agrees with this analysis: “The accumulated liquidity and investment pressure on funds lead us to be cautiously optimistic.” At Cuatrecasas, Correig believes that the momentum will come from business transformation: “Companies must undertake key transformations, and that drives M&A.” In short, M&A in Spain is not booming, but it has not come to a standstill either. San Miguel, for his part, insists that “the processes announced or underway suggest a very active end to the financial year.” And in times of uncertainty, that is perhaps the best news. 



MIGUEL CUESTA



# ENERGY & INFRASTRUCTURE

# 11 September 2025

Av. Dr. Cardoso de Melo, 1283 - Vila Olímpia, São Paulo

**21.00** DINNER



DRESS CODE: business suit / cocktail dress



# The firm leading growth in Spain

With a 92% annual increase in turnover in 2024, CCS Abogados tops *Iberian Lawyer's* ranking of percentage growth in turnover, thanks to a hybrid model that combines complex long-term litigation with established traditional areas

por julia gil

According to *Iberian Lawyer's* ranking of the 50 law firms with the highest turnover in Spain in 2024 (See our [article on Iberian Lawyer No. 144](#)), CCS Abogados has led the percentage growth for the year with a 92% increase in turnover, reaching 13.1 million euros. This milestone consolidates the firm as one of the most dynamic players in the Spanish legal sector, thanks to a strategy based on specialisation, technological innovation and financial independence. However, this growth is not the result of a one-off situation. Behind it lies a hybrid business model that combines experience in traditional legal areas with a clear commitment to highly complex mass litigation. The firm has led macro-cases such as the truck cartel case—with more than 4,100 favorable rulings—and is now facing what may be the largest litigation in the European tourism sector: the claim against Booking for anti-competitive clauses, representing the 16,000 companies associated with CEHAT. **Jaime Concheiro**, who runs the firm alongside **Carlos Seoane** and **Miguel Caamaño**, shares in this exclusive interview the keys behind this model of sustainable growth, supported by the development of proprietary tools and a clear roadmap: to grow through specialisation, without compromising legal excellence or long-term commitment.

**The 92% growth in turnover during 2024 has positioned CCS as the fastest-growing law firm in Spain. What have been the main drivers of this growth and how has such rapid expansion been managed internally?**

There are two business models: one is the traditional part of the legal profession (M&A, tax, civil, public, etc.) and the other is medium- and long-term projects, made up of 40 lawyers, which is dedicated to the resolution of complex legal disputes. Over the last six years, we have established ourselves as the law firm that has handled the most cartel damage claims in Spain, both in terms of number and amount. The increase in turnover is due to several significant rulings that have generated a significant financial return on some of these projects, particularly the one relating to the truck cartel. These are projects that are undertaken on a contingency basis and, as they have a long development period without generating income, the necessary expenses during their execution are covered internally with the firm's own funds and with resources generated by other areas.

**Which areas would you highlight as having experienced the most growth?**

Apart from the firm's organic growth in its tradi-



SANDRA FREIRE, JAIME CONCHEIRO, MIGUEL CAAMAÑO AND CARLOS SEOANE

tional areas, two new projects have been developed. On the one hand, the claim against Booking for anti-competitive contractual clauses imposed on Spanish hotels. The second macro-case is the recovery of amounts of hydrocarbon tax unduly charged between 2013 and 2018. The Spanish Confederation of Freight Transport (CETM) and the Spanish Confederation of Bus Transport (CONFEBUS) commissioned us to handle this case, and more than 2,000 companies engaged in freight and passenger transport have joined this process, in which CCS Abogados is processing administrative and judicial claims amounting to 72 million euros.

**What is the biggest challenge you have faced in this process of transformation and consolidation?**

When you are dealing with complex litigation and, in many cases, with contingency fees, you need the firm to be solid and robust in generating recurring revenue in its traditional areas. On the other hand, there must be an awareness within the firm that this way of generating revenue is both complementary and, in the long term, has an impact on traditional areas. Medium- and long-term projects are a common goal and a market niche in which we have been pioneers.

**CCS Abogados has made a strong commitment to mass litigation with a highly technological approach. What role has innovation played in the firm's positioning strategy?**

In 2024, we launched the Litigation Data Intelligence (LDI) platform. This solution is an evolution of Truck Data Intelligence (TDI), which has been used successfully in the processing of thousands of lawsuits related to truck cartels. The new platform has been adapted to the challenges of the Booking case and provides us with greater flexibility and scalability. It is being used for the 2,000 Hydrocarbon Tax claims and the 5,000 car cartel claims.

**How do you prepare a team to tackle cases of this size and impact?**

It is not enough to know how to manage volume effectively and efficiently. A macro case can never compromise on legal quality. This is

## CCS ABOGADOS IN FIGURES

**€13.1m**

Turnover

**92%**

Growth (2023-2024)

**80**

Experts

**4**

Partners

**3**

Offices

something that has always been of paramount importance to us. To this end, we have strengthened the various departments of the firm with counsel, ranging from former judges to university professors and lecturers, who are specialists in various fields. They are actively involved in the legal management of cases and, together with the partners and senior lawyers, also participate actively in the firm's internal and ongoing training.

**CCS has opted for specialisation and innovation in complex litigation. Is this a long-term strategic decision or a response to a temporary market opportunity?**




Macro cases will continue to occur. Perhaps their judicial management can be modulated and rationalised, but it is an activity that required actors who could carry out this work effectively and with legal soundness, avoiding populism. Directive 104/2004 on actions for damages for infringements of competition law has been a turning point. Today, it is compatible for your business model to be based mostly on the management of macro-cases.

**Do you see Spanish companies being more sensitive to defending their antitrust rights than they were a few years ago?**

Previously, it seemed that this was a matter exclusively reserved for large companies with powerful legal resources. Today, a high percentage of the population already knows what a cartel is and that they are harmful to the economy. In addition, companies and individuals now know that they can claim damages at a reasonable risk and cost. Ten years ago, this was unthinkable. Business and consumer associations, as well as

law firms that lead and publicise macro-cases, have a lot to do with this. Today, there are mechanisms for joining forces with other affected parties, which means that legal costs are no longer a barrier preventing those affected by these practices from claiming compensation.

**What are CCS Abogados' strategic objectives for 2026? Will you continue to focus on organic growth through complex litigation, or are you considering other avenues such as diversifying your practice, attracting talent or even inorganic growth?**

We will continue to grow organically as we have always done, both in traditional areas and in medium- and long-term projects. In 2026, the Booking project will be launched, which will require a large investment in technological and human resources. We already have two other very important projects in the pipeline that are expected to come to fruition in 2026. 



CCS ABOGADOS - OFFICES



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AWARDS

13<sup>th</sup> Edition

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UNDER

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## 25 September 2025

### VP Madroño

Calle del General Díaz Porlier 101  
28006, Madrid

**19:30** CHECK-IN

**19:45** COCKTAIL

**20:30** AWARDS CEREMONY

**21:15** STANDING DINNER

**23:00 - 01:00** OPEN BAR

For more information please visit [www.iberianlawyer.com](http://www.iberianlawyer.com)  
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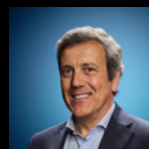
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 Head of Business Affairs  
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 Country Legal Counsel  
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**Pedro  
Correia**  
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*Grupo Lusíadas Saúde*



**Carla  
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**Carlos López  
Martín De Blas**  
 Secretario General | Director  
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De Castro  
De Miguel**  
 Member of the Investment  
 Committee, *Claimbnb*



**Marta  
dos Ramos**  
 Head of Legal  
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**Alberto  
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**Rocío  
Maesso de Liñán**  
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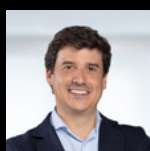
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 secretary of the Board  
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**Manuel  
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 Responsible for Legal M&A  
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*Roadis*



# The Data Act under review

Challenges and opportunities of the new European Data Regulation

by mercedes galán



The European Data Regulation (Data Act), which will be fully applicable from September 12, 2025, represents one of the most ambitious legislative pillars of the European digital ecosystem. With direct implications for business models, contracts, compliance, and relationships between manufacturers, users, and third parties, the Data Act goes far beyond the GDPR. Its focus is on non-personal data generated by connected products and related services, and it aims to democratize its access and use, in pursuit of a more innovative, interoperable, and fair economy. To understand its impact from different angles, we brought together three leading partners in their respective fields: **Eric Maciá**, lawyer and Head of R&D Legal Consulting at PONS IP; **Anna Levitina**, partner at Ambar; and **Alba María López**, associate partner and Head of the Legal & Business department at Elzaburu.

One of the most significant strategic shifts imposed by the Data Act is the obligation to allow users to access the data generated by the connected products they use. This requirement directly affects the traditional model of exclusive data control. "Data is no longer a resource that can be monopolized by the manufacturer", says Alba María López. "Connected products and services will have to be designed so that users can access, use, and share the data generated by them, even with third parties". A paradigm shift that, according to Anna Levitina, pushes companies toward more collaborative ecosystems: "The regulation treats data as a shared resource. Companies must cooperate with users and other market players under fair and transparent conditions. They can no longer isolate data as an exclusive asset". This new approach not only redefines the relationship between users and manufacturers but also opens opportunities for third parties who previously had no access to this data. "A new market for support and maintenance of solutions opens up, where positioning will be determined by service quality and not just by control over the data", adds López.

The Data Act is not just a matter of access rights. It has a direct impact on the technical and legal configuration of connected products and services. "Companies will have to redesign their IoT devices and related services so that data is accessible,



**«This will undoubtedly require a reconfiguration of both hardware and software elements of IoT devices and the software of related services»**

**Eric Maciá (PONS IP)**

secure, free of charge, and structured", explains Eric Maciá. "This will require reconfiguring both hardware and software elements. It will also affect the terms and conditions of services, which must be adapted to avoid abusive clauses". In highly technological sectors such as the automotive industry, this contractual revision can be an earthquake. "Imagine a car manufacturer with a large market share imposing contractual conditions on suppliers or users. The Data Act seeks to balance that relationship", says Maciá. Levitina agrees: "Many current contracts will not fit within the new legal framework. Clauses granting exclusivity over data or limiting user access may be deemed invalid". Indeed, the regulation introduces strict limits on abusive clauses, especially in unbalanced commercial relationships. According to Levitina, "it will be necessary to review agreements with clients, partners, and suppliers to ensure they respect the new rights of access, use, and data sharing".



**«Data is no longer a resource that can be monopolized by the manufacturer»**

**Alba María López (Elzaburu)**

## MOST AFFECTED SECTORS

The implications of the Data Act will not be the same across all sectors. According to Maciá, the manufacturing, industrial, and healthcare sectors will be the most impacted: “These are areas where IoT devices are used intensively and where, until now, manufacturers have not shared data that would allow users to perform maintenance tasks independently”, López reinforces this idea: “Companies will be able to obtain data generated by the use of third-party solutions, with user consent. This will change the current relationship with customers and alter traditional loyalty approaches”.

One of the most sensitive points of the Data Act is the tension between data access and the protection of know-how. How can openness be ensured without exposing trade secrets? “The regulation is aware of this tension”, explains Maciá. “In fact, it is the EU regulation that mentions trade secrets the most, after the specific directive on the subject. It establishes up to three layers of protection, both indirect and direct”. These protections include limiting the type of data that

must be shared (raw data and metadata, but not inferences), prohibiting its use to manufacture competing products, and allowing contractual conditions to protect confidentiality. López also highlights the importance of the proportionality principle: “Access will only be granted to strictly necessary data, not to strategic developments such as algorithms or software. And if a real risk to business secrecy is detected, access may be denied, as long as it is properly justified”. Nevertheless, this opens the door to conflicts. “Disputes about the reasonableness of the required protection measures are likely to proliferate”, warns Maciá. “A company may impose conditions that are reasonable for itself but prohibitive for an SME. To what extent will that imbalance be accepted?”.

## COMPATIBILITY WITH THE GDPR

For companies that already comply with the GDPR, the Data Act entails a new level of complexity. Although some principles — such as transparency or security — are shared, the tension between the GDPR’s principle of data minimization and the obligation to share data with third parties is not trivial.

One of the key questions is whether the new regulation opens the door to legally monetize data. Anna Levitina clarifies: “It’s important to distinguish between compensation and monetization. The Data Act allows reasonable compensation in some cases, but it does not enable a commercial exploitation model of the data as such.” Rather than generating revenue by controlling data, the opportunity lies in developing new services based on previously inaccessible data. “For example, companies accessing urban data (mobility, environmental sensors) could create solutions for energy planning or public space management”, says Levitina.

## HOW SHOULD COMPANIES PREPARE?

Just over a year before its application, the Data Act requires a deep legal and technical review. “It’s urgent to adapt contracts to avoid abusive clauses

and define clear internal policies to manage access, portability, and data sharing”, emphasizes Levitina. López recommends a comprehensive audit: “Audit the elements that generate data, classify the information, review contracts, and strengthen internal protocols and training. It can be a great opportunity to develop advanced products and open new business lines”. The problem, however, is that many companies have not yet grasped the scope of the regulation. “What we encounter most is a simplistic reading of the regulation, without grasping its deeper implications”, warns Maciá. “In Spain, not as much emphasis is being placed as in other EU countries, where the business sector is preparing more actively”. The Data Act is here to change the playing field. It forces the redesign of products, the rethinking of contractual relationships, and the balancing of openness with protection. It brings challenges, yes, but also a new framework for innovation. As Alba María López concludes, “those who know how to adapt will not only comply with the regulation but will also be better positioned in a more open, dynamic, and competitive digital ecosystem”.



**«The value no longer lies in controlling access to data, but in what can be built on top of it.»**

**Anna Levitina (Ambar Partners)**





IBERIANLAWYER



# INHOUSECOMMUNITYDAY

LC PUBLISHING GROUP

## 6 NOVEMBER 2025

Wellington Hotel & Spa | C. de Velázquez, 8

## MADRID



## THE EVENT DEDICATED TO THE LEGAL IN-HOUSE FUNCTION



# INHOUSECOMMUNITYDAY

LC PUBLISHING GROUP

- 09:00 Check-in & Welcome Coffee
- 09:25 Welcome Message  
**Aldo Scaringella**, CEO, *LC Publishing Group S.p.A.*
- 09:30 Opening Speech
- 09:35 **ROUNDTABLE I**  
THE MODERN MANAGER: IN-HOUSE LEGAL NAVIGATING BETWEEN TENSIONS  
**Speakers\***  
**Adolfo Díaz Ambrona Moreno**, General Counsel and Secretary to the Board  
*Santander España*  
**Alicia Juristo Contreras**, General Counsel, *Enagás Renovable*  
**Jaime López de Villarreal**, Global Head of Legal, *LOEWE*  
**Patricio Morenés Hoyos**, General Counsel and Secretary to the Board, *Grupo Dia*  
**Ignacio Pereña Pinedo**, General Counsel, *ACS Group*  
**Moderator**  
**Ilaria Iaquinta**, Editor-in-Chief, *Iberian Lawyer*
- 11:00 Coffee Break
- 11:30 **ROUNDTABLE II**  
M&A, JV, AND CORPORATE RESTRUCTURING: THE LEGAL TEAM IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT  
**Speakers\***  
**Enrique Blanco Antón**, Head of Legal M&A and Corporate, *Urbaser*  
**Regina Madrazo**, Head of Legal M&A and Finance, *MOEVE*  
**Patricia Montoro**, Head of Legal M&A and Corporate, *Indra*  
**Andrea Viale**, Global Head of Legal and Secretary of the Board, *idealista*  
**Moderator**  
**Julia Gil**, Journalist, *Iberian Lawyer*
- 12:45 **ROUNDTABLE III**  
CHOOSING THE RIGHT LAW FIRM: BRAND, PRICE, OR PEOPLE  
**Speakers\***  
**Mariana García Fernández de Mesa**, General Counsel Iberia, *Accor*  
**Carlos Menor Gómez**, Legal Director & Compliance Officer, *Renault Group*  
**Ursula Reyes Rodríguez Robles**, Head of Legal Spain and Portugal, *KIABI*  
**Natália Veiga Rebelo**, Country Legal Manager, *IKEA Portugal*  
**Moderator**  
**Ilaria Iaquinta**, Editor-in-Chief, *Iberian Lawyer*
- 14:00 Light Lunch



# Are we regulating the future of work properly?

Experts analyze the current state of the hybrid work model, its risks and regulatory challenges, at a key moment of return to work

by mercedes galán

After the pandemic, hybrid work has become a new normal in many organizations. However, the legal framework regulating this modality remains incipient, uneven across countries, and full of grey areas in its application. In Spain, we have specific legislation on remote work (Law 10/2021), as well as the legal recognition of the right to digital disconnection since 2018. Despite these advances, the practical compliance with these rules raises doubts, both from companies and from the workers themselves. Where are the limits of flexibility? What impact does it have on mental health? And how can companies prevent labor and legal conflicts in this changing environment?

## THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

From a legal point of view, the current hybrid model continues to pose major challenges for companies. **Pablo Santos Fita**, Partner in the labor department at Gómez-Acebo & Pombo in Barcelona, highlights three key aspects. First, he points out the rigidity of the legal definition of remote work.

“Labor legislation has introduced a defined concept of regularly performed remote work — that which is carried out for at least 30% of the workday over a three-month period. Many companies choose not to exceed that threshold in order to avoid the additional obligations imposed by Law 10/2021, such as the provision of equipment or reimbursement of expenses”, he explains. Second, he notes that although the law recognizes remote work as voluntary and reversible, this reversibility is subject to what is agreed in collective bargaining or in the individual agreement, which generates friction. “In practice, this can end up leading to conflicts or even lawsuits if not managed properly”, he warns. The third major challenge he mentions is more structural: the outdated nature of the legal framework in the face of social and technological change. “Our labor law maintains structures typical of the industrial era, where working and resting times were clearly separated. Today, reality is much more fluid. We need to move toward a comprehensive rethinking of the concept of working time”, says Santos Fita.



«We need to move toward a comprehensive rethinking of the concept of working time»

**Pablo Santos Fita**

Along the same lines, **Miguel Pastur**, employment Partner at Bird & Bird, agrees with this diagnosis. Although he acknowledges that Spain has made important progress, he believes that “Law 10/2021 lacks the flexibility needed to adapt to the reality of certain jobs and sectors. It is excessively rigid in aspects such as the determination of schedules”. Pastur also points out that regulations such as time tracking are applied equally to on-site and digital environments, which creates operational difficulties. “This greatly complicates its application in hybrid models”, he says.





**«Hyperconnectivity and the inability to disconnect create real problems»**

**Miguel Pastur**

## **FLEXIBILITY AND MENTAL HEALTH**

One of the main promises of remote work was the improvement of work-life balance. And indeed, many people have been able to better organize their personal lives thanks to the elimination of commuting and greater time autonomy. But this flexibility has also brought new tensions. According to Pastur, “new technologies have opened important doors to flexibility, but they have also blurred the boundaries of the workday, sometimes in ways that are dangerous for mental health. Hyperconnectivity and the inability to disconnect create real problems”. The practical implementation of the right to digital disconnection, recognized since 2018 in Spanish legislation, remains highly uneven. “Our impression is that this measure has not

been among the priorities of companies”, warns Santos Fita. “There are still many, especially SMEs, that do not have a digital disconnection protocol in place, or that apply it only formally”. In this regard, Pastur believes that “as important as regulation is raising awareness at the business and social level. Real policies must be established to prevent the negative effects of hyperconnectivity, beyond what the law says”.

## **CULTURE AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE**

From within organizations, the experience of recent years has also been revealing. **Eva Ferrada Lavall**, Partner responsible for the General Secretariat and HR at Uria Menéndez, acknowledges that the firm implemented remote work “naturally and based on trust in our professionals”. The experience, she assures, was positive: “It confirmed to us that responsibility and commitment do not depend on physical presence. Today, remote work is a fundamental flexibility tool at the firm”. However, Ferrada also underscores the limits of this modality. “In-person presence is still key, especially for training younger professionals, transmitting corporate culture, and collaborative work. The key lies in balance”, she maintains.

On the expectations of young talent, the HR perspective is clear: “They value the possibility of organizing their time more flexibly, but they also want to be present, interact with their colleagues, talk face-to-face with partners, and learn day by day. The important thing is to combine that autonomy with real opportunities for integration and development”. From this position, Ferrada advocates for a more flexible regulatory framework adapted to demanding professions such as those in the legal field: “It would be very positive to have regulation that understands the specificity of the sector, without losing guarantees”.

## **RISKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In daily practice, labor lawyers also identify certain recurring errors. Among them, Santos Fita mentions the lack of formal remote work agreements, even though Law 10/2021 requires





**«Today, remote work is a fundamental flexibility tool at the firm. However, in-person presence is still key, especially for younger professionals»**

**Eva Ferrada Laval**

them. “It is still quite common for the company and the worker not to have formalized an agreement with the legally required minimum content. This creates uncertainty in the event of conflict”, he notes. He also highlights problems derived from reversibility: “There are cases in which a worker refuses to return to the office when required, or inverse situations where the company closes offices and forces staff to work from home. Both situations can create conflict if not clearly regulated”.

International remote work adds another layer of complexity. “Although it is beginning to be regulated, it raises many legal and practical questions, especially in terms of Social Security and risk prevention”, he points out. Looking ahead to this month of getting back to work, Santos Fita recommends reviewing remote work agreements, updating or implementing digital disconnection protocols, and analyzing how flexibility worked during the summer to better plan for the coming year.

## THE EVOLUTION

Everything suggests that the future of work will continue to be hybrid, albeit with nuances and constant adjustments. The tensions between productivity, flexibility, mental health, and labor rights will continue to be part of the public and business debate. “Pay transparency will occupy a prominent place in the coming years”, anticipates Pastur. “With the transposition of European Directive 2023/970, companies will face new challenges, although in Spain we have already had similar obligations for years”. Beyond the laws, it will be essential to develop an organizational culture capable of adapting regulations to the specific reality of each company and sector, without losing sight of workers’ well-being.

The challenge, ultimately, is not just to regulate the future of work properly. It is to understand that this future is already here. ■



# Between lawsuits and digital strategy

Partner in charge of the Intellectual Property department at CMS and former co-managing partner of the firm in Spain, who is **María González Gordon: her career path, her vision of leadership, and the current challenges facing the legal tech profession**

by ilaria iaquinta

**María González Gordon** greets us in her office on a July morning in Madrid, where the heat is already stifling before noon. On her desk: reports, a digital strategy outline, several ongoing cases, and a complaint that looks set to go to trial. In one corner, a notebook filled with handwritten notes and a steaming cup of coffee. “I like taking notes the old-fashioned way. It helps me think”, she remarks.

The partner heading the Intellectual Property, Industrial Property and Digital Business area at CMS, and former co-managing partner of the law firm in Spain, González Gordon is a well-known name in legal circles. But who is she, really? How does she see herself? “My days are intense — she says bluntly — They’re packed with strategy, new issues, hours of research so I don’t miss what matters. Sometimes I feel like there just aren’t enough hours in the day”. She laughs. “At the office they joke that they can tell I’ve arrived by the pace of my footsteps”. Half joke, half portrait, the line sums up her style: fast-paced, juggling many tasks, fully committed.

She speaks candidly about what drives her — clients, strategy, teamwork — and openly admits she struggles to switch off: “I find it hard to say no. I like to be involved in everything”, she says. She also confesses to a lingering sense of anxiety: “I’ve got FOMO (fear of missing out, *ed.*). But it’s also what keeps me on my toes, engaged, eager to build, to stay up to date”.

## THE ORIGINS

Her relationship with the law began early, influenced in part by her father, a banking lawyer who worked from home. “I used to watch him receive clients, and I was fascinated by how they would come in with their heads down and leave feeling relieved. That’s what I wanted to do: help solve people’s problems”, she recalls. To this was added an almost visceral sense of justice.

“I get a knot in my stomach when things aren’t done properly”, she admits. Even at school, when career guidance tests aimed to sketch out possible futures, the result was unequivocal: “I scored 100% for law and 95% for the army. I even

considered becoming a military lawyer... but life took me in another direction”, she adds.

## FIRST STEPS

The journey begins at ICADE, where legal training intersects with a demanding work culture and a distinct concept of leadership shaped by Jesuit values. After a brief stint in the banking sector, her career soon takes a clear direction: litigation. One of her professors, **Antonio Castán**, facilitates her first contact with the law firm where he worked. “My father told me: try working at a law firm — there’ll always be time to go into business later”, she recalls. That’s how she arrives at Elzaburu, a historic firm specialising in industrial property, where she stays for almost eight years.

There, almost by chance, she stumbles upon a field that she quickly makes her own. “It’s brilliant — film, advertising, technology, creativity, conflict, strategy... it has it all. I don’t get bored for a single day”, she says. During this period, she hones her skills in complex proceedings and develops a taste for technical precision. But after a while, she begins to miss a more cross-disciplinary perspective: “I wanted to understand how our field interacted with tax, labour, commercial law... and how I could contribute more through my own expertise”, she explains.

The answer arrives at Gómez-Acebo & Pombo, where she spends over a decade. It’s a period of both professional and personal growth: she gets married, has children, and begins leading teams. “I became very involved in initiatives around employee experience. That’s when I realised just how interested I was in management, talent, and people”, she admits. She works with clients from a wide range of sectors, from major entertainment

«I get a knot in my stomach when things aren’t done properly»



conglomerates to tech startups. This diversity, she explains, demands constant adaptation. “Every client forces you to think differently, to speak their language, to understand their sense of urgency, and to adjust your approach to risk”, she emphasises.

In 2019, she joined CMS with a major challenge: to build the Industrial and Intellectual Property and Digital Business department from the ground up — a team that today comprises around a dozen professionals. “It was a blank slate. We opted for a cross-cutting, integrated approach, closely aligned with the digital challenges already on the table”, she recalls. She did so alongside **Ricardo Gómez Barreda**, with whom she shares a common vision, priorities, and working style. Just six months later, the pandemic hit. “It was an enormous challenge, but also an intense learning experience. It proved that even in the worst scenarios, if there’s passion, things can work out”, she admits, though there were moments of sheer uncertainty. “There were times when we weren’t sure if we could keep up the pace, or whether the model we were building would hold. But we carried on, stuck to doing

things our way, and it turned out really well”, she adds.

Her role within the firm quickly expanded: she joined the board of directors, became part of CMS’s global executive committee, led the global Digital Business practice, and, from July 2023 to April 2025, served as co-managing partner in Spain. “It was like doing the most intense master’s degree in the world. I learned to prioritise much more clearly, to delegate, and to see the firm as a whole — not just through the lens of my own department, she explains.

Why did she step down? “Taking on management responsibilities was a way of giving back to the firm all that it has given me, but at heart — and I will continue to be — I am a lawyer committed to a practice that is thriving, full of exciting challenges”, she says this with conviction, although she acknowledges that the decision was not an easy one.

## THE PRESENT

In addition to her litigation work, Gordon designs regulatory strategies for sectors undergoing transformation, such as healthcare, entertainment, mobility, artificial intelligence, and non-personal data. She takes part in international forums like INTA, the European IP Forum, ITechLaw,

«At heart – and I will continue to be – I am a lawyer committed to a practice that is thriving, full of exciting challenges»





and the Global Legaltech Hub, and collaborates with organisations such as the EUIPO and the Ministry of Industry. She has also contributed to public consultations on European directives. “I’m passionate about helping shape regulation that is clearer, more sensible, and better aligned with market realities. Technicality and practicality don’t have to be at odds”, she asserts. This connection between law and real-world application is central to her approach. Her style blends spontaneity, legal precision, and an almost obsessive curiosity. “I enjoy reading the terms and conditions on websites and platforms. They often hide key insights”, she says. She doesn’t shy away from conflict or pressure—on the contrary, they seem to galvanise her. “When everything seems impossible, I tap into a kind of energy that I can channel into finding a solution. I guess that’s when I reconnect with my original calling: helping others” she adds. She readily acknowledges that not everything goes according to plan. “I’ve lost cases, had projects that didn’t take off. But there’s something to learn

**«I’ve lost cases, had projects that didn’t take off. But there’s something to learn from that, too. What matters is pushing forward»**

from that, too. What matters is pushing forward”, she says. Of all the lessons she’s learned along the way, one stands out above the rest: perseverance. “Everything counts. If I had given up, I wouldn’t be who I am today”, she concludes.

She has a clear idea about leadership: “It’s about service. It’s generosity. It’s putting the firm’s interests ahead of your own. It’s also about building bridges, fostering a sense of belonging, listening more than you speak”, she says. In daily practice, that means being present and nurturing people’s development processes. “I care about how they grow, how they mature. I want to see them

go far. And if one day they say, ‘I learned this from María,’ then I’ll know I’ve done something right”, she remarks. Still, it’s not always easy to strike the right balance between supporting others and giving them space. “Sometimes I find it hard not to step in. I have to remind myself that leading also means knowing when to let go”, she admits. From her perspective, gender equality is not a side issue, it’s structural. “I grew up without female role models. I had to go out and find them. And now it’s my turn to be a reference for others”, she explains. “For years, I was often the only woman in the room during meetings. It wasn’t always comfortable, or easy. That left a mark on me—it’s why I’m so committed now to supporting other women”. It’s not about being perfect heroines, she adds. “It’s about honest, real journeys. Ones that show it can be done—and that there’s more than one way to get there”.

What drives her today? “Everything happening on the technological and regulatory front fascinates me. We can even have a say in how legislation is drafted. It’s an incredibly exciting time to be working in this area of law”, she says. But she is also driven by something much closer to home: her team. “I want to see them grow, reach great heights, and to know that I contributed to that”, she adds.

Any regrets? Few. Unfulfilled dreams? “I’ve ticked off many: appearing before the CJEU, leading a major tech contract, running a law firm... But if there’s one thing I still hope to achieve, it’s to see my team succeed”. Gordon smiles. Later in the evening, she has dinner plans with friends. The day goes on, with new challenges ahead and the same unwavering determination to keep moving forward. ■

**«Sometimes I find it hard not to step in. I have to remind myself that leading also means knowing when to let go»**



ANTONIO SERRANO ACITORES

# Towards a digital Renaissance in law

**From legaltech to artificial intelligence, from the classroom to the law firm: innovation expert Antonio Serrano Acitores outlines the roadmap to a new professional model for the legal sector**

by ilaria iaquinta

Summarising who **Antonio Serrano Acitores** is in just a few lines is no easy task. Lawyer, professor, entrepreneur, advisor to several governments on artificial intelligence... the label hardly does him justice. He could be described as a guru of legal innovation — or, taking a slight risk, even as Spain's answer to **Richard Susskind**.

He holds a Law degree from ICADE and earned a PhD with distinction from Rey Juan Carlos University. With seven master's degrees — including an MBA — and further education in digital transformation from MIT, he bridges legal practice with academia and entrepreneurship. He has worked at Linklaters, run his own law firm, is a tenured professor at URJC, and has founded Legaltech ventures such as AI-LEARN and tech training companies like Spartanhack — winner of the 2022 National Technology Award. For two years, he served as business development director at Chiara, a platform for public speaking and legal oratory training using virtual reality and AI. He is the author of fifteen books and over 150 publications on the metaverse, digital law, and innovative contracting.

With this triple perspective — professional, academic, and technological — he shares in this exclusive interview with *Iberian Lawyer* his insights on the real state of innovation in law firms, the impact of AI on legal practice, and the challenges that will shape the profession's future.

**Let's begin with a seemingly simple question... What does "innovation" really mean? Is it merely a matter of technology, or does it also involve culture and processes?**

Etymologically it doesn't necessarily imply technology. We shouldn't confuse creativity, innovation, and technology: while they are related, they are distinct. Creativity is the ability to generate ideas. The innovator puts ideas into action, solves problems, and adapts to uncertainty. Technology incorporates innovation, but not all innovation is technological, you can innovate in processes or workflows. In the legal sector, which is traditionally conservative, innovation can be challenging. But when a technological innovation proves its value, it's

**«In the legal sector, which is traditionally conservative, innovation can be challenging»**

widely adopted—though we tend to lag behind.

**Technology has evolved at an exponential pace over the past two years. Not long ago, speaking about AI in a law firm felt futuristic—at least in Europe, where its use in courtrooms lagged behind that of the United States. But today, generative AI is already a reality. How did we move from bafflement to adoption?**

With the arrival of ChatGPT in November 2022 and other generative AIs, every sector experienced a major upheaval. This technology—unlike others such as Blockchain, which was supposed to change everything but largely failed to do so beyond Bitcoin and smart contracts—has actually landed. If my children are doing their homework with ChatGPT, it's clearly permeating all layers of society. It is reshaping society and, by extension, the law and our professional interaction with technology. I train many law firms. There is fear—understandably so—among legal professionals: concerns around data protection, anonymisation, and more. Firms are experimenting with the technology, but what's lacking is proper training and reassurance. AI is a tool at the service of human dignity. We must treat it as such: lose the fear, get hands-on, break it if needed. In the legal sector, this should happen in controlled environments—but it must begin. This technology enables a small law firm to compete with a larger one, and a national lawyer to contend with an international counterpart.

**In concrete terms, where do we currently stand in Spain? How is this impacting day-to-day practice?**

We're more or less on par with the rest of Europe. Harvey attracted attention in the US, but interesting developments have taken place here as well. Publishers such as Lefebvre, Tirant, and Aranzadi have acted swiftly, and several highly

active LegalTech startups have emerged—Maite, Justicio, Little John, to name a few. Because this won't be optional: either you stand out, or you're replaceable.

**What are their real potential uses? Are these tools overhyped, or can they genuinely redefine legal work? And what promising applications have yet to reach law firms?**

We're currently in a hype phase, as is the case with any new technology. Eventually, we'll reach a stage of stable productivity. The possibilities are vast: document translation, in-depth research, report generation, timelines, summaries. Even with general-purpose AIs, a great deal can already be done; sector-specific models go further, handling contracts, claims, and rulings. AI needs good data, and in the legal profession, we have it: judgments, regulations, and valuable knowledge. At this point, Pareto's law can be applied: the human provides the instruction, the AI does 80% of the work, and the human reviews the rest. This speeds up processes, increases client capacity, or allows for a better work-life balance.

**How should the use of these technologies be regulated to ensure responsible implementation? What risks do you see in widespread adoption?**

There is confusion surrounding the AI Regulation, which creates uncertainty. For lawyers, the more confusion there is, the higher the fees – but no one really knows which direction things are heading. While 40 companies are calling for the Regulation to be postponed and there is a brain drain to the US or China, one thing is clear: regulation is necessary, but it must not stifle innovation. It makes no

sense for the Regulation to come into effect in stages over three years when AI evolves by the day. In law firms, it's not about jumping on the bandwagon: you need to understand what it's for and whether the data is of good quality. AI without reliable data is like a Ferrari without fuel. At present, there are no clear standards: everyone uses a different system. Without consistency, we're failing to tap into its full potential.

**What structural changes should law firms adopt to integrate AI effectively?**

It's crucial to start fostering interdisciplinary collaboration. When I worked at Linklaters, for example, the IT staff were hidden away upstairs — almost like in a cave — surrounded by their computers. That has to change. Lawyers need to engage with IT professionals — and even more so with those working on AI — just as they would with any other professional profile.

**What kind of professional profile will be most in demand in the coming years?**

Personally, I'm drawn to digital Renaissance profiles: lawyers who possess in-depth legal expertise but also understand technology, speak multiple languages, and excel at public speaking. Leaders who serve others, equipped with empathy and emotional intelligence. Profiles that blend legal knowledge with soft skills: business development, communication, the ability to inspire trust. And, of course, who are proficient in using technology.

**Is there still room for the “traditional” lawyer, or is a complete reinvention inevitable?**

I'm going to be blunt: either you change, or you'll be replaced. Any lawyer focused on simple tasks is going to be left behind. Everything that can be automated, will be automated. It's time for some honest introspection—if a machine can do what you're doing, you'd better start thinking about a change. Machines are already handling many tasks remarkably well, around the clock, no breaks, no coffee.

**One of the most common concerns is: if certain routine tasks are automated, what happens**

**«AI enables a small law firm to compete with a larger one, and a national lawyer to contend with an international counterpart»**



### to young lawyers who traditionally “cut their teeth” on that kind of work?

I don't believe we'll see 10,000 people being laid off tomorrow, but if 10 retire, perhaps only 2 will be hired — and one AI. It will be a gradual transition. Junior lawyers are at risk: where we used to translate and draft emails, now an AI can do it directly. That's where the concern lies. That's why young professionals must become digital Renaissance people — they need to find their unique value. Even though people claim lawyers will disappear, the confusion created by these changes will actually generate a need for legal professionals. There's a window of opportunity to become digital lawyers. But that doesn't just mean writing articles about digital law — it means using the technology. Many people write about AI without ever having tried one. That's not good enough.

### What role should the university play in this transformation?


The university — and the entire educational pathway — is fundamental. I work with four “E”s: effort, excellence (as a habit), ethics (as a reflective exercise of freedom), and education, which encompasses the previous three. In the US or the UAE, AI training already begins in primary school. In Europe, the Regulation mandates literacy (Article 4), but there are no clear policies. In Spain, the debate oscillates between “screens yes” and “screens no”; the virtue lies in finding a balance. Universities must become centres for AI research. At Rey Juan Carlos University, I've created AI Learn, a lab combining AI and virtual reality so that teachers can overcome their fear and improve their teaching. In my own classes, I already incorporate AI: I explain the theory and we apply it using digital tools. This is the ideal time for learning: we can combine formal and informal education, and each person can design their own

**«It makes no sense for the Regulation to come into effect in stages over three years when AI evolves by the day»**



learning journey.

### Let's go back to the starting point: innovation. Beyond AI, what is still missing in law firms—and in the legal market more broadly—for innovation to truly become part of the sector's DNA?

Innovation is closely tied to education. We need to develop leaders, because a true leader is inherently innovative. It's about identifying those profiles and nurturing them. Law firms must embrace genuine digital transformation, using the tools available to them. Leadership should be ethical and inquisitive, with a mindset geared towards learnability and lifelong learning. To innovate is to take action—to implement, to put the firm front and centre in the client's mind. And above all, we must stop being afraid. As Marie Curie said, we fear what we do not understand. We need to start engaging with AI, experimenting with it, and seeing how it can support us. It's not AI that takes away jobs, but rather those who know how to use it better. The good news is that generative AI is still relatively new—it's not too late to catch up. All it takes is a shift in mindset. 



# Justice and algorithms: who controls the artificial judge?

The ethical, legal and practical challenges of implementing artificial intelligence in judicial systems

by mercedes galán

Artificial intelligence has begun to make its way into the courts, and it does so with the promise of transforming processes that have remained virtually unchanged for decades. From tools that prioritize cases to predictive systems for recidivism, to jurisprudence search engines or applications that transcribe hearings in real time, AI is presented as an ally to reduce workload, improve efficiency, and free up time for higher value-added tasks.

However, its incorporation into the core of a State power is not without questions. What degree of technological intervention is admissible in a judicial process without compromising fundamental rights? How far can an algorithmic tool influence, even indirectly, a ruling? And what guarantees must surround its use to avoid bias, errors, or lack of transparency?

## AI AS SUPPORT

The idea of automated justice, where algorithms replace human judgment, finds no support among experts. The opinion is unanimous: artificial intelligence should play a supporting role, never a decisive one. **Carlos Javier Galán**, presiding judge of Social Court No. 14 of Seville, is clear on the matter: “I am opposed to decision-making by artificial intelligence, but I am an unequivocal supporter of using it as an auxiliary tool in that process.” In his experience, AI can be particularly useful in preliminary stages, such as evidence analysis or systematization of regulations and case law, always under human supervision. “AI can help the judge process both internal and external information related to the procedure, and that would greatly assist our work if properly implemented,” he adds.

**Alejandro Castellano**, CEO and co-founder of Maite, a startup specializing in AI applied to the legal sector, agrees with this approach. For him, the key lies in understanding the nature of this technology, which operates under non-deterministic logic. “Generative artificial intelligence introduces a new paradigm: the same query can generate different answers at different times. This demands maximum caution in the legal field,” he warns. Consequently, he argues that the use of these tools should resemble managing a qualified collaborator more than executing

«I am opposed to decision-making by artificial intelligence, but I am an unequivocal supporter of using it as an auxiliary tool in that process»

**Carlos Javier Galán**



CARLOS JAVIER GALÁN



**«AI introduces a new paradigm: the same query can generate different answers at different times»**

**Alejandro Castellano**



ALEJANDRO CASTELLANO

predictable commands. “The function of AI is to enhance the judge or lawyer’s capabilities, not to replace their judgment,” he emphasizes.

Alfonso Peralta, magistrate and member of the advisory committee on artificial intelligence of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (AI-CEPEJ-COE), also rejects the image of the “robot judge” as sensationalist fantasy: “All of that is smoke and clickbait headlines. AI will be a tool, like the word processor or databases were. It will not replace the judge.” What matters, he insists, will be the capacity of legal professionals to train and take advantage of its potential to automate repetitive tasks and focus on those of higher value.

## HUMAN SUPERVISION

One of the main points of consensus among the interviewees is the need to establish clear supervision and control mechanisms. All three agree that any algorithmic tool used in the judicial field must be subject to permanent human validation. Galán insists: “Even in the simplest procedures, I believe there must be a responsible person who ultimately makes the decision, validates it, signs it, and takes responsibility.” And he laments that many IT tools are developed without taking into account the daily experience of those who work in the courts: “Procedural regulations are often dictated or applications implemented without listening to those of us with experience. Then they don’t deliver the desired results.” For Peralta, this supervision is not only a technical imperative, but an ethical and legal one. He recalls that the new European AI Act considers the use of artificial intelligence in justice as a high-risk activity, subject to the highest standards of governance and transparency. “The judge will always be the decision-maker. AI must be under human supervision, and that is non-negotiable on both ethical and legal grounds,” he states.

## ALGORITHM OPACITY

One of the most cited risks is the lack of transparency in certain algorithms, especially in decisions that affect vulnerable people or sensitive contexts such as liberty, custody, or recidivism. “What worries me is the opacity,” Galán acknowledges. “Algorithms cannot, under any circumstances, be opaque, especially if they



influence precautionary measures, protection orders, or assessments of recidivism.” And he warns about the use of unofficial or unvalidated judicial tools: “It cannot be that each judge individually uses the tools they have at their disposal. That entails enormous risks.” Castellano, from a technological perspective, clarifies that not all models are equally opaque. “Proprietary models tend to offer a very limited level of transparency. In contrast, open-source ones allow for independent scrutiny, which is key to detecting biases or vulnerabilities.” For this reason, he argues that the legal sector must opt for auditable systems under expert community oversight: “Transparency is not a preference, but a necessity to guarantee fairness.”

## REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Although Europe is advancing in the regulation of these technologies, significant gaps still remain. Alfonso Peralta highlights the need to adapt Spanish procedural legislation to new challenges such as real-time facial recognition. “The legislator will need to provide for a new Article 588 nonies to authorize this type of system in the Criminal Procedure Law,” he points out, referring to the pending development of the draft Artificial Intelligence Law. Furthermore, he insists that algorithms that may impact judicial authority must comply with strict requirements of compliance, auditability, traceability, and explainability. “Anything that affects fundamental rights must be subject to the highest legal and

ethical standards and independent oversight,” he concludes. Castellano also draws attention to the need for clear limits and protocols: “The key lies in establishing a framework where technology serves the law, and not the other way around.”

## TWO-TIER JUSTICE?

One of the most pressing concerns relates to fairness: can the introduction of AI create a gap between those who understand, audit, and control the algorithms, and those who don’t? Peralta warns that there are already public algorithms with little or no transparency: “There may be systems that are biased, that cause harm, but we don’t know it and, if we did, we wouldn’t know why.” As a result, he predicts that we will see more legal challenges against algorithms for non-compliance. “The system’s opacity is irresponsible. In five years, we’ll be pulling our hair out over how these systems were implemented today without being audited,” he predicts.

The modernization of justice inevitably involves the incorporation of new technological tools. But it also requires a deep, transparent debate with all the necessary safeguards. As Galán summarizes: “Although we’re very far from it today, I believe it is possible to streamline procedures and reduce judicial burden using AI. It won’t be a panacea, but it must be part of the solution.” That said, he concludes, always under clear criteria, official tools, and human validation. Because ultimately, justice cannot only be efficient—it must remain just. ■



ALFONSO PERALTA

**«All of that is smoke and clickbait headlines. AI will be a tool, like the word processor or databases were. It will not replace the judge»**

**Alfonso Peralta**

## BLACK BOX OR TOOLBOX?

Large Language Models (LLMs), used in AI-based legal applications, often operate as “black boxes.” Their internal functioning is so complex that it is practically impossible to audit how they reach a conclusion.

However, not all models are equally opaque:

### Model Type Examples Key Features Modelos propietarios

Proprietary Models GPT (OpenAI), Claude (Anthropic), Gemini (Google) - Closed code- Non-public training data- Difficult to audit

Open Source Models LLaMA (Meta), Falcon (TII) - Public architecture- Allows independent audits- Greater public oversight

### Sensitive applications in Spain:

Some public systems based on AI that impact judicial or administrative decisions:

- **VioGén** – Risk assessment in gender-based violence cases
- **TVR / RisCanvi** – Recidivism prediction and prison classification
- **ABIS** – Facial recognition used by police forces
- **AI in Social Security and Tax Agency**

The risk? Many of these algorithms operate with little or no transparency, lacking clear mechanisms for external audit. Choosing explainable, auditable, and controlled AI is not a technical option: it is a democratic imperative.





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**Jorge Ortega**, Managing Director, *EOS*

**Meritxell Roca Ortega**, Partner, Co-Head of the Mergers and Acquisitions, Private Equity Department and Head of the Madrid and Barcelona Offices, *Pavia e Ansaldo Studio Legale*

**Alvaro Urbon**, Managing Director, *Ares*

MODERADORA

**Julia Gil**, Periodista, *FinancecommunityES*

20:30 Ceremonia

21:00 Cocktail

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# The Top 3 barometer

**Uría Menéndez, Garrigues and Cuatrecasas: a 2024 snapshot of the leading names in the Spanish legal market**

by ilaria iaquinta



Where is the business model of Spain's top law firms heading? What are their current priorities, structures and strategic areas? What do they have in common and where do they differ? The answers lie in the most recent sustainability reports published between April and July 2025 by the three biggest law firms in the Spanish legal sector — Cuatrecasas, Garrigues and Uría Menéndez — with figures updated as of the end of the 2024 financial year.

Despite differences in scale, turnover or international reach, a shared narrative emerges across these law firms that defines today's market and signals tomorrow's: a growing commitment to diversity, a firm investment in artificial intelligence, increasingly refined talent policies and a strategic vision of the role of law in broader social and business transformation.

## PRESENCE, TURNOVER AND WORKFORCE

From a numerical standpoint, Garrigues leads the Spanish legal landscape in turnover, workforce size and global presence. In 2024 the law firm posted revenues of €481.85 million, up 6.1% year-on-year, with a team of 2,211 individuals — 1,703 of whom deliver legal services — spread across 30 offices in 12 countries. Cuatrecasas followed, reaching €436.1 million in turnover, a 12.2% increase on the previous year. This marked the highest growth rate among the trio for a second year running and also its most significant rise in the past five-year period, during which cumulative turnover rose by 38.3%. The firm's workforce totals 2,068 professionals — including 1,400 lawyers — across 26 offices in 12 countries. Uría Menéndez, instead, closed 2024 with revenues of €275.87 million, a 1.49% increase against a difficult macroeconomic backdrop. Its team numbers 1,107 people, including 702 lawyers and 134 partners, across 11 offices in seven countries, with a strategic alliance in Latin America through PPU (Philippi Prietocarrizosa Ferrero DU & Uría).

Talking about the composition of workforces requires nuance. At Uría Menéndez, all reported workforce data — including percentages by age and gender — is based on a sample of 965

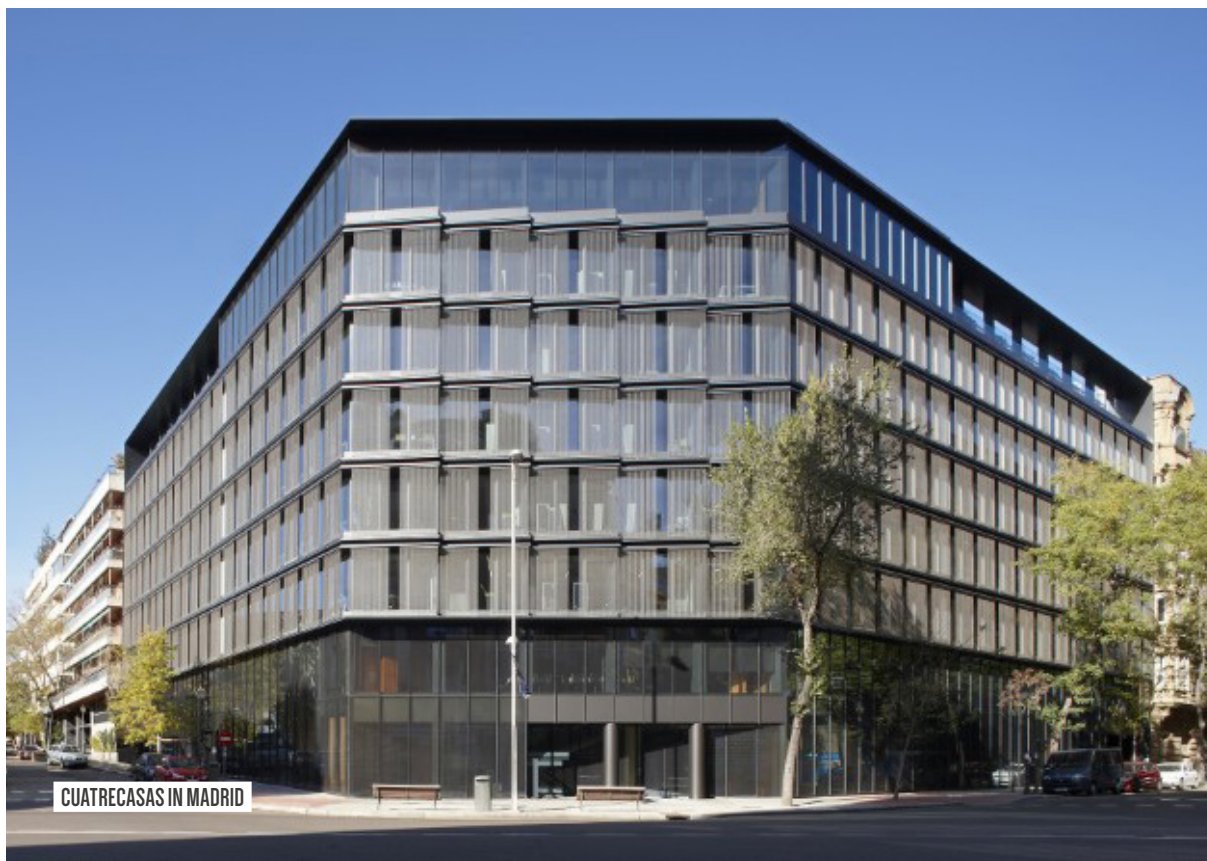


individuals: all employees in its offices, including Lisbon and Oporto, excluding partners and emeritus partners. In contrast, Cuatrecasas and Garrigues report their figures based on their entire workforce. That said, the generational structure is as follows: in Uría Menéndez, 37.5% of the team are under 30, 45.3% are between 30 and 49, and 17.2% are over 50. At Cuatrecasas, the corresponding percentages are 32.2%, 48.9% and 18.9%. At Garrigues, the distribution is 29.4% in the youngest group, 51.1% in the middle bracket, and 19.5% above that age.

Beyond mere percentages, all three law firms strengthen their talent retention strategies, each via distinct approaches. Uría Menéndez follows the traditional up-or-out model, hiring between 70 and 90 newly qualified graduates annually who enter a structured career pathway from day one with the prospect of progress to partner. This path encompasses ongoing training — over 6,300 hours delivered in 2024 — mentoring and international

mobility. Cuatrecasas centres its professional development strategy around a corporate university, offering legal, technological and cross-disciplinary training, and serving as a platform for programmes focused on leadership, equality and diversity. Meanwhile, Garrigues adopts a continuous performance evaluation model built on a well-defined career path, incorporating training milestones in key areas and regular competency reviews to support progressive professional growth. Three approaches, one shared objective: building a culture of sustainable professional growth aligned with the challenges of the sector.

The data on gender diversity show shared progress and shared challenges. Across their workforces, all three firms report a female majority, though this shifts at upper levels of responsibility and governance. Cuatrecasas reports a 56% female workforce, Garrigues 51%, and Uría Menéndez 59.7%. However, these percentages drop as one



CUATRECASAS IN MADRID



moves up the hierarchy: at Cuatrecasas women occupy 50% of committees and management bodies, though the 70% target set for 2024 has not been met. Their fixed-quota female partners remain at 19%, unchanged from 2023. Garrigues, for his part, has 21% female partners and emphasises its commitment through structural conciliation programmes and an eighth edition of its Mentoring Femenino in 2024. Uría Menéndez discloses that women make up just 25% of its board of directors, while among partners 84% are men and only 16% women.

Regarding the pay gap, Cuatrecasas reports that junior, associate and senior female lawyers earn on average between 0.4% and 2.9% more than their male counterparts, though this reverses in higher categories such as of counsel — where men earn 7.1% more — and in certain organisational roles. Garrigues presents category-based differentials ranging from -0.5% to 5.5%. At Uría, the aggregate gap is virtually neutral, standing at -0.18% in women's favour.

## COMPENSATIONS

Compensation figures differ significantly by firm, professional tier and function. At Uría Menéndez, lawyers under 30 average €46,969 annually, those aged 30 to 49 earn €75,284, and those over 50 around €55,360. The overall lawyer average is €72,847, compared to €45,180 for non-legal staff. At Garrigues in Madrid, average lawyer compensation ranges from €45,396 for junior levels to €166,838 for counsel. Internal departments present averages between €46,399 and €49,081. Their package combines fixed salaries, performance incentives and tailored benefits. Cuatrecasas reports annual legal compensation from €40,624 for junior lawyers to €199,719 for of counsel. In administrative areas, salaries range from €26,000 for secretarial staff to over €219,711 for senior executives. These levels are supplemented by variable components and a benefits package including medical insurance, flexible remuneration, ongoing training and conciliation measures.

## INNOVATION: SHARED COMMITMENT

If talent is the engine of transformation, technology is its chief accelerator. Digital transformation is now a cross-cutting strategic priority at the three leading Spanish firms, with concrete advances in process automation, development of internal solutions and especially the integration of generative artificial intelligence into legal practice. Garrigues made significant investment in innovation in 2024, allocating €17 million to digital transformation — a 14.1% increase year-on-year, bringing its five-year total to nearly €70 million. Its generative AI strategy blends commercial tools such as Copilot and Harvey with its internally developed platform GA\_IA, backed by over 220 million documents. Cuatrecasas coordinates its AI efforts through CELIA (Cuatrecasas Experta Legal IA), encompassing all its AI initiatives. This includes the Research Tool, an advanced legal-querying platform developed with an external technology provider, alongside a digital training programme open to the entire workforce. In the case of Uría Menéndez, 2024 marked a turning point in its tech roadmap with the consolidation of a generative AI strategy. Following a pilot phase, the solution launched in early 2025, supported by other innovation projects improving internal workflows and client services.

## GOVERNANCE

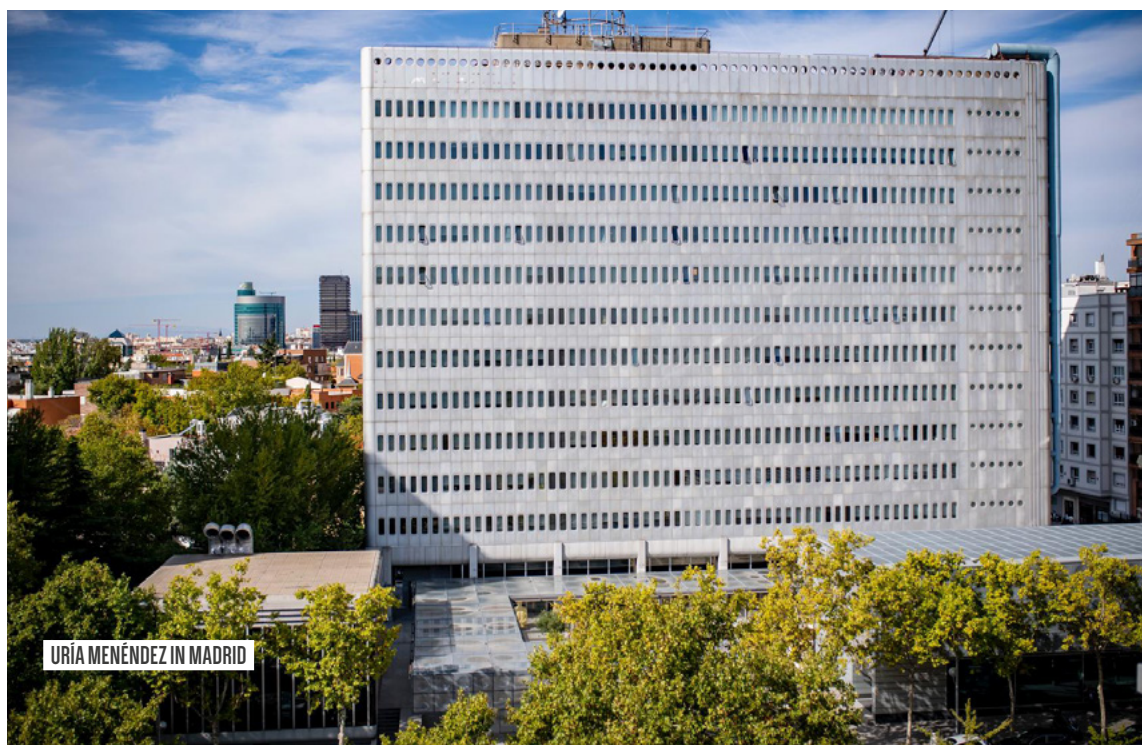
Who leads these large organisations? How is leadership structured amid change and global expansion? Uría Menéndez, which will celebrate its 80th anniversary in 2026, has a clear transition timetable: **Salvador Sánchez Terán** will assume the presidency from 1 January 2026, after two terms as managing partner, while **Jesús Remón** will become partner emeritus. **Antonio Herrera** — a partner since 2007 and head of Corporate Law since July 2024, with leadership stints in New York and Barcelona — will serve as managing partner. In his first public remarks, Herrera emphasised a leadership style grounded in legal rigour, client dedication, internal talent and social

responsibility. At the same time, **Marta Pontes** will join **Antonio Villacampa** in the co-leadership of the Lisbon office, succeeding Bernardo Diniz de Ayala, who will remain involved in public law and project work. 2026 will also mark the 25th anniversary of Uría's presence in Portugal. Cuatrecasas completed its leadership transition in April 2025, appointing **Javier Fontcuberta** as CEO while **Rafael Fontana** remains non-executive chair until the end of the year. From 1 January 2026, the chair position will be held by **Luis Pérez de Ayala**. Fontcuberta, who has served as managing director since 2022, is now leading a new chapter anchored in three strategic priorities: people, client-centricity and innovation. At Garrigues no leadership changes have occurred — the firm continues under the presidency of **Fernando Vives** since 2014. Yet it enacted a major symbolic and operational change by relocating its Madrid headquarters to the Torres de Colón — a move that speaks to its institutional consolidation

and organisational renewal ([See Iberian Lawyer N. 145 to read our dedicated article](#)).

## COMMON TRENDS

Beyond structural differences, the three firms share a common outlook on the sector's future. Their reports highlight transformation vectors that will shape the Spanish legal market over the short and medium term: sustainability as a strategic axis, AI as a transformative lever, diversity in talent acquisition and new models of client collaboration. They also face shared challenges: maintaining profitability in a volatile environment, adapting their structures to generational change, and redefining value propositions for an increasingly demanding, global client base. The future of the Spanish legal sector hinges not only on technical excellence but on the capacity to anticipate, lead and shape change. 





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# VidaCaixa: when the radical becomes the norm

**Pablo Pernía (director of legal advice) and Daniel López (director of corporate legal advice) describe the comprehensive transformation of the legal department of one of Spain's largest insurance companies**

by julia gil

Like any transformation, it began with a simple idea, but one with potential: what seemed radical could become a valid way to evolve. At VidaCaixa, that idea served to rethink the legal function. It was about opening space for new ways of thinking, exploring paths that were not yet fully defined, knowing that some decisions would require adjustments along the way. This marked the start of a transformation plan that represented a turning point, not only in the way of working, but also in the way the legal department positions itself within the company. Today, when people talk about VidaCaixa – CaixaBank's insurance subsidiary specialising in life insurance, savings and investment plans and pensions – they don't just mention its volume of assets under management (more than €129 billion) or its nearly seven million customers. They also point to its legal advice as a benchmark for transformation within the sector.

## LEGAL STRUCTURE

VidaCaixa's legal department is made up of 30 in-house professionals and around 50 external professionals, who are fully integrated into the company's day-to-day activities. Its structure, as explained by **Pablo Pernía**, director of legal advice, is defined by replicating the main lines of business: 'We have a department focused on insurance and product governance, another on pensions and benefits, a department that coordinates tax strategy and a corporate department that assumes the rest of the legal advice responsibilities, including the transformation strategy,' he explains. The objective, he adds, has always been to ensure the greatest possible cross-functionality: 'to be relevant to the business and the company and to do so with maximum efficiency.'

When Pernía joined VidaCaixa a decade ago, the role of legal advice was much more limited: 'Firstly, it was much smaller. In addition, its focus was very much on the regulatory and tax advice necessary for the launch of new products, and there it was already a benchmark, but in everything else, our role was very auxiliary and reactive. We were here for whatever was asked of us, if we were asked'. Everything changed in 2019, when the board of directors decided to assign the department full responsibility for legal



«For VidaCaixa, it is a privilege to have CaixaBank's legal advisory services as a benchmark»

**Pablo Pernía**

and regulatory risk management. "From that moment on, we became another business area, participating in decision-making", recalls Pernía.

This new scenario meant greater demands and responsibility. "This required us to consider radical measures," says **Daniel López**, director of corporate legal advice. Thus, was born *Radical is Normal*, the transformation plan that would mark the following years. "We wanted the team and the organisation to accept that we were going to propose things that would sound a little crazy and that we would surely get some of them wrong and have to pivot," he explains.





**«Standards designed for banking should not be applied; it is a completely different business»**

### Daniel López

A plan based on three specific objectives and with no set dates for achieving them. «We want to position ourselves at the forefront of legal advisory services for regulated industries and CaixaBank's corporate standard; align ourselves and deeply internalise our purpose within VidaCaixa with a strategic focus rather than a purely operational one; and promote the cultural change necessary to achieve all of the above and move from a largely reactive legal function to a proactive one focused on anticipating risks and generating business opportunities,» López lists. Inspired by benchmark models such as CaixaBank and the standards of the global ACC association, the team launched 51 projects between 2019 and 2024. The result: a legal advisory service that now operates according to a model based on operational efficiency, strategic vision and rigorous analysis.

## SYNERGY WITH CAIXABANK

The relationship with the legal department of CaixaBank, VidaCaixa's parent company, has been key to the success of the process, according to those responsible. «There is total symbiosis,» says Pernía. «CaixaBank provides us with policies and internal standards and acts as a shareholder. Furthermore, it is the main distributor of our products and must follow the guidelines we establish as an insurer in this regard.» Pablo Pernía adds that, in a way, CaixaBank also led the way: «For VidaCaixa, it is a privilege to have the legal advice of CaixaBank as a reference point. Due to the pressures generated in the banking business long before those in the insurance business, it has shown us the way to successfully transform the legal function and position ourselves at the forefront of the market.»

## THE LEGAL PYRAMID

Managing millions of customers and transactions requires not only dedication, but also a structured approach. VidaCaixa has responded to this challenge with a five-level pyramid model that structures legal work from the operational to the strategic level. At the base are traditional operations – contracts, reports, consultations – which, in López's words, «should function almost without any involvement from the internal team». The next level groups together complex issues, which are handled entirely by the team or with external support. The third layer is dedicated to supervising and optimising the model. The fourth allows for the analysis of that supervision. And the fifth, at the top, focuses on influencing business strategy. In addition, the legal department not only accompanies but also leads key aspects of the life cycle of the savings and pension products they market. «We were already collaborating with the business development areas in the ideation and implementation of new launches. Now, we also coordinate the entity's public positioning strategy vis-à-vis regulators and supervisors at both the national and EU levels,» explains Pernía. «We ensure that the product that has been launched meets the expectations of customers and supervisors and, if necessary, we promote its review and evolution.»




## THREE MODELS OF EXTERNAL COLLABORATION

VidaCaixa maintains a high level of outsourcing with law firms, although with an unconventional structure. Specifically, depending on their needs, they have support teams (not necessarily legal); panels of specialised legal collaborators; and highly sophisticated and tailored advice. The selection criteria vary, but the truth is that what they value most is: “in the first case, efficiency and reliability are paramount. In the second case, the ability to adapt to our reality and respond quickly with a high level of quality. In the third case, we look for differential value and craftsmanship in the design of the solution,” explains López.

Five years after the start of its transformation, VidaCaixa’s legal team has not only redefined its role within the company: it has gone from being a support area to becoming a strategic partner, “with the aim of facing the challenges that arise in an increasingly changing environment and doing so using as few resources as possible and maximising internal value,” concludes Pernía.

## REGULATORY CHALLENGES

Like so many others, the regulated sector faces increasing regulatory pressure. But, according to López, its uniqueness within the financial world requires different treatment: “Standards designed for banking should not be applied; it is a totally different business. When it comes to pensions and long-term savings, European society faces a huge – even momentous – challenge, and the insurance industry is particularly well positioned to provide impactful solutions.”

Today, its reason for being is no longer measured solely in terms of legal certainty, but also in terms of impact, efficiency and business vision. They have turned the unthinkable into common practice. And they have shown that when ambition is combined with purpose, the radical is not an exception: it is simply the new normal. 



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# Law as a technological facilitator

**Isabel Álvarez Calvo, vice president of legal affairs and director of ethics & compliance at Capgemini Iberia, highlights the strategic role of the legal department in innovation and corporate ethics**

by julia gil



Like a moth to a flame, **Isabel Álvarez Calvo** was drawn to the transformative potential of technology from the very beginning of her career. What others saw as uncertain territory, she saw as a fertile opportunity where the law could act not as a hindrance, but as a facilitator of change. That conviction has marked a career spanning more than 25 years, starting at the law firm Escalona & de Fuentes—where she was a senior associate in M&A and head of the IT department—and continuing at large technology companies, leading the legal departments of Atos Iberia, Atos Major Events, and Worldline Iberia. Today, she is vice president of legal and director of ethics & compliance at Capgemini Iberia, a group present in more than 50 countries with over 340,000 employees. In this conversation with *Iberian Lawyer*, Álvarez Calvo reviews the evolution of the profile of the technology lawyer, the type of added value she seeks in external law firms, and how the compliance function is articulated in a global organization. She also talks about young talent, the transformative role of the legal department in the age of AI, and why “reinventing the role of the lawyer” is no longer an option, but an urgent necessity.

**You hold several key positions at Capgemini. What is a typical day in your professional life like?**

I would say it is a combination of strategy, leadership and legal support for the business. First, I review with my team the issues that require immediate attention: complex contract negotiations, regulatory reviews, compliance decisions and coordination with internal and external stakeholders. I participate in management and committee meetings for decision-making and control, business and strategic meetings, operational meetings, as well as working groups to define global compliance policies. Another essential part of my job is managing a specialised legal team. I also participate in mentoring processes and always set aside time for continuous training, institutional and social impact initiatives, and reflection and anticipation of regulatory, technological and social trends.

**«From the beginning, I was attracted by the transformative potential of technology»**

**You have developed a solid career in the technology sector. What attracted you to the legal world linked to technology?**

From the beginning, I was attracted by the transformative potential of technology and the role that law can play as a facilitator of that transformation. Technology poses new ethical, regulatory and social challenges that require a solid legal response. This intersection between innovation and regulation seemed to me to be fertile ground for professional growth and for adding value from a strategic legal perspective. That is why I specialised in this business and oriented my career towards global technology companies such as Capgemini.

**Has it evolved much since you started?**

The evolution has been extraordinary. Today, legal departments not only manage risk, but also participate in product definition, data strategy, artificial intelligence governance and digital sustainability. This has raised the profile of the technology lawyer, who must combine legal knowledge with digital skills, ethical vision and leadership ability.

**At Capgemini, what is the role of the legal department in digital transformation?**

It is a key strategic partner in digital transformation, not only as a guarantor of regulatory compliance, but also as a driver of innovation. We are fully integrated into the business strategy, anticipating risks, designing legal frameworks adapted to new technologies and supporting the development of digital solutions from conception onwards. We have an internal platform called OneLegal, which provides

seamless access to legal and management resources, and we have also developed our own workload management tool, OneWork.

**How are you integrating this technology into the legal department, and what new challenges does its adoption pose?**

AI is at the heart of our transformation and is essential to remaining competitive. We have equipped our teams with tools such as Generative AI and Copilot. Three years ago, we were one of the first legal departments to establish an AI Office, made up of experts in the field and in legaltech, whose mission is to provide strategic guidance and support to our lawyers in this changing environment.

**In this context of transformation and innovation, what role does external advice from law firms play? What value do you look for in the law firms you work with?**

We look for partners who understand the complexity of our sector, who are agile in their response and who help to anticipate risks and opportunities. The differential value of an external firm lies in its ability to provide

**«We understand that data protection is not only a legal obligation, but also a differentiating factor that strengthens our reputation»**

perspective, innovation and technical depth. We are also looking for firms that are committed to innovation in their own processes. Finally, the ethical and diverse component is also key.

**You are also responsible for ethics and compliance. How is this function structured?**

As a cross-cutting pillar. In an international group, it is essential to have a common framework of principles, policies and procedures. We have a global chief ethics officer and chief compliance officer, as well as local managers who adapt the programme to each country. As the person responsible for this function in Spain, my work focuses particularly on adapting this global framework to local realities. For almost ten years, we have had an ethics and compliance committee that acts as a collegiate body to supervise the application of these policies and analyse any situation within this area independently and rigorously.

**In terms of compliance, what are the main priorities today in terms of ESG, data protection and global compliance?**

ESG is an essential part of our identity and an essential requirement for operating in global markets and with increasingly demanding customers. In data protection, we focus on ensuring proactive compliance with regulations, integrating cybersecurity as an essential pillar for protecting personal information. We participate



in committees where risk treatment plans are reviewed, emerging threats are assessed, and mitigation measures are defined. We understand that data protection is not only a legal obligation, but also a differentiating factor that strengthens our reputation, drives innovation and consolidates the trust of our customers. Finally, regarding global compliance, we continuously monitor the global regulatory landscape and update internal policies and procedures.

**You have led legal teams through different stages and transformations. How important is talent management today?**

It is a strategic factor for the success of any organisation. One of the great challenges today is the need for hybrid profiles, capable of moving with ease between highly specialised law, technology and business strategy. That is why we encourage continuous training and exposure to complex and often international projects. We are committed to the development of digital, technological, communication, critical thinking and collaborative leadership skills. Each member of the team must feel valued and part of a project with impact. ■

**WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP**

**Isabel Álvarez Calvo** is a founding partner of EJE&CON and a member of Women in Tech, two key networks promoting women in leadership, “especially in sectors such as law and technology, where the presence of women in leadership positions remains limited.” For Álvarez, these initiatives are essential for breaking down structural and cultural barriers through mentoring programs, training, events, and publications. In turn, they act as agents of transformation in organizations by promoting equality policies, diverse selection processes, and alliances with companies and institutions to build more inclusive environments. They also play a key role in the public agenda. “They raise the voice of women in decision-making forums, contribute to the debate on the future of work and technology, and highlight female talent in strategic sectors.” EJE&CON and Women in Tech, she says, are catalysts for this new leadership of which she is proud: “a movement that can no longer be stopped.”



Oxneo Building, Capgemini headquarters - Las Tablas (Madrid) Source: Capgemini



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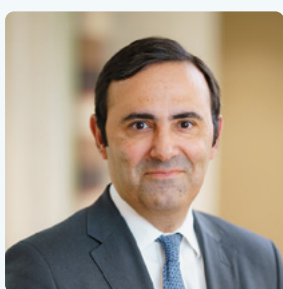
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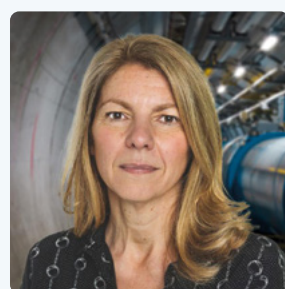
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RACHEL COHEN

# Rachel Cohen

**The story of the young American attorney who left one of the most powerful law firms in the U.S. on principle—and how a new generation of lawyers is beginning to rewrite the rules of power**

by michela cannovale

In the world of top U.S. law firms—defined by massive fees, glass towers, and headline-making mergers—some rules aren’t written but deeply ingrained in firm culture. Chief among them: never challenge leadership publicly.

**Rachel Cohen** knows this well. She joined the Chicago office of legal giant Skadden Arps in 2022 as a finance associate. But as pressure from the White House blurred the line between law and politics, she decided those unwritten rules no longer applied—at least not for her.

The turning point came when Skadden signed a \$100 million pro bono deal with the Trump administration. It followed growing pressure on firms accused of interfering in elections or using unfair hiring practices. Executive orders and formal letters placed diversity and recruitment policies under scrutiny. Many noted the targets were often firms that had defended progressive causes or controversial clients. Several firms—including Paul Weiss, Willkie Farr, and Skadden—chose to cooperate, pledging a combined \$900 million in legal services aligned with administration priorities. For some, it was strategic. For Cohen, a betrayal. When it became clear Skadden wouldn’t push back publicly, Cohen resigned. Her decision sparked a ripple effect. Within weeks, associates at other firms quit for similar reasons and launched campaigns for more transparency and independence. Over 2,000 lawyers signed an open letter urging firms to defend legal integrity from political pressure. Many also called for the removal of attorneys seen as “compliant in moments of crisis” from civic and academic boards. “I felt like we were ending up on the wrong side of history,” Cohen told us—a phrase she repeated more than once. After Skadden, she joined Lowell & Associates, a firm that defends those targeted by politically motivated government actions. On LinkedIn, she writes: “Attorney. Opinions are loud and my own.”

But this isn’t just idealism. Her story reflects a broader shift in legal culture. A new generation, shaped by global crises and rising inequality, is bringing ethics back to center stage. Values over caution. Social responsibility over self-interest. The belief that taking a stand isn’t political—it’s



part of the job. And maybe, in the end, it will be the lawyers still watching from the lower rungs—listening, learning—who one day lead the profession, setting its limits and priorities.

#### **How difficult was it to resign from Skadden?**

I resigned over concerns about the legal industry, particularly large corporate law firms, failing to appropriately respond to actions by the Trump administration that I—and many others—believe to be early-stage authoritarianism. It was a very difficult decision, but I knew it would only get harder if I waited, as it would be harder to make change.

#### **Was there a specific event that made you decide?**

My resignation was actually triggered by the actions of a different law firm, Paul Weiss, which made a deal offering the Trump administration \$40M in free legal services in exchange for the administration dropping an order entered against the firm. I was working on general industry organizing efforts and also pressuring my own firm, Skadden, to stand up for firms facing Trump administration orders, which punish firms for past representation adverse to the Trump administration by stripping them of government contracts, among other things. It became clear to me that Skadden was not prepared to meet the

moment and that the non-answers I was getting to questions about our path forward were likely the same answers given to associates at Paul Weiss. I wanted to be proactive and use my limited leverage to pressure action instead of to protest. Eight days after I left, Skadden itself entered a deal promising the Trump administration \$100M in free legal services.

#### **How did your colleagues and supervisors react?**

People were very supportive, though I heard from very few partners. They are definitely not allowed to talk to me right now.

#### **How did Trump's executive orders start to affect the work being done inside large law firms?**

The immediate impact was that firms were scared of taking on certain kinds of pro bono representation out of fear that the Trump administration would view it as something worth punishing. This work initially was mostly things that directly challenged the government, which is bad enough, but I suspect it will extend to cover things like immigration representation broadly as Trump has an expansive definition of what is «adverse» to him. There are also reports that the Trump administration plans to use those free legal services pledged by firms to do things like defend cops accused of violent misconduct. I think we're still in the very early stages of seeing how work is affected.

#### **Do big firms—and smaller ones—have a civic duty to push back when government policies cross ethical lines?**

I think all lawyers have a civic responsibility to take a stand where powerful people attempt to erode the American legal system itself for the sake of having even more power.

#### **Do you see a generational divide in how lawyers view their roles during politically charged times?**

I don't. I think the generational divide frame is usually the wrong one. Plenty of older attorneys are naming what is happening. Where the divide seems to lie is between people who have partnership interests and those who do not, because the partners stand to lose more income percentage-wise, though they would still be extremely, extremely rich.

#### **Do younger lawyers approach ethics, social justice, and pro bono work differently from senior ones?**

I think that this doesn't really have to do with age and instead has to do with how much you participate within systems. There are more young lawyers in large firms talking about these things because people who care deeply about them tend to leave as opposed to trying to stay and make partner, but many more senior lawyers in the industry broadly have spent their entire careers caring about these things.

#### **Looking back, how do you think your resignation affected those around you—at the firm, among peers, or in the legal community?**

I'm still finding out. It certainly impacted the broader legal community more than I anticipated.

#### **Has this experience changed your idea of success or what you want from your career?**


It has changed very little except timeline. I feel like my five year plan has totally changed because all five years happened in six weeks!

#### **Do you think more young lawyers will follow your path, or do you still feel like an outlier?**

There are almost a dozen young lawyers who have already resigned publicly, and many more who have resigned quietly. I will always feel like an outlier because I acted first, but I think my beliefs on this are actually a majority opinion in the United States.

#### **What advice would you give a law student considering a top-tier firm today, especially after your experience?**

I don't advise one way or the other in terms of joining or not joining top tier firms because most people have financial and individual considerations that can't be generalized. What I do tell everyone now is to remember how much power you have. Don't do work that you find immoral or unethical. Get comfortable saying no. Get comfortable advocating firmly but professionally. The power players try to tell associates that associates have no power.

They're lying. 





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18.15	Check-in
18.30	Welcome Cocktail
19.15	Roundtable
20.00	Awards Ceremony
21.00	Seated Dinner

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# Behind the headlines

A conversation with Fabio Bertoni, general counsel of The New Yorker

by ingrid furtado

Every industry has its specialists, and law is no different. Behind each niche market stands a lawyer who speaks its language, understands its risks, and helps shape its evolution. From health tech to fashion, from aerospace to agriculture, legal professionals tailor their guidance to fit the unique rhythms of each sector.

The media world is no exception: a space where general counsel approach not just contracts and compliance, but press freedom, digital rights, and the shifting boundaries of public interest and privacy.

In an interview with *Iberian Lawyer*, **Fabio Bertoni**, general counsel at *The New Yorker*, shares what it's like to oversee the legal side of one of the world's most respected and iconic journalistic institutions.

#### **Tell us about your daily routine being a general counsel...**

My primary focus is on the content of the magazine, and so during the day, I am constantly reading the articles, and reviewing videos and podcasts, and artwork that are going to be published, vetting them for potential legal issues of copyright, defamation, trademark, and privacy. I work with the editors and fact-checkers to make sure our journalism is defensible. That is big part of my day. I also work on other matters like litigations and deals. For instance, we have expanded our podcast offerings significantly. We acquired a podcast called *In the Dark*, and that was an example of an acquisition we recently completed. *In the Dark* went on to win a Pulitzer Prize for the season they completed with us, and they are now working on another season. In addition, we have a syndication and co-production deal with a public radio station called WNYC, for another podcast called *The New Yorker Radio Hour*, which is also broadcast on dozens of public radio stations around the United States.

#### **What does it mean to be the legal backbone of an industry built on speed, expression, and scrutiny?**

It's obviously an important responsibility, but

**«There are a lot of economic pressures on media companies now, and one of the things that comes up in the industry is various methods of cost-cutting»**

we are part of the larger institution, which is dedicated to accurate reporting. For example, after the reporter has submitted their article to the editor, the fact-checking department looks at the piece again and tries to verify everything in the piece. And that is a very important process. It is not unique to *The New Yorker*. There are other places that do it, but certainly the New Yorker has a very old and very established, rigorous practice of doing it. We have around 20 fact-checkers who speak a variety of languages, and some of them have advanced degrees in certain areas. So, we have a robust team. The legal department then reviews pieces to determine whether there are potential legal risks of publishing something. Often, we are asking: have we done appropriate diligence in the reporting and in fact checking of the piece? Are we representing different views of a disputed issue? The key question: Is it fair? We are constantly making sure that our reporting process is thorough and defensible.

#### **What are the current challenges at the intersection of editorial decision-making and legal oversight?**

There are a lot of economic pressures on media companies now, and one of the things that comes up in the industry is various methods of

cost-cutting. Some outlets reduce the amount of editorial oversight or fact-checking. We at the New Yorker feel very strongly that that is core to our business. We are proud to keep doing it, and it makes our journalism better.

**On that note, what recent trends have you observed regarding how AI is being used or addressed in relation to copyright?**

AI presents real challenges to the media and journalism business. If AI takes our content and republishes it in some other manner, and, if we are losing page views because people are getting their answers straight from AI rather than coming to us for information, that's a problem for our business. We need to protect our content. We have to keep an eye on what AI companies are doing without our permission. So that is an issue. But it is not just AI: traffic to websites coming through social media companies is another situation. Several years ago, some social media companies began reducing the volume of news shared on their sites, because they believed it was not great for their business to promote news too much. We lost a lot of traffic because people wouldn't see articles that their friends had shared on social media. So, that was a first hit. And now the search engines, rather than providing links to us, as I said, are providing AI summaries, and that is decreasing our page views again. I am speaking now on behalf of all media companies, not just *The New Yorker*; it has been an ongoing stress for publishers generally. So, our primary strategy is to maintain the quality of our work and the quality of our brand, by maintaining the integrity of our work and producing things that people want to hear, see, and read and constantly finding new ways to reach new audiences.

***The New Yorker* is known for its striking visual identity. In a world where images can quickly become memes, T-shirts, or protest symbols, how do you go about protecting original illustrations?**

Like all media companies, we are on both sides of copyright issues. We have our copyrights that





**«Humans are ultimately responsible for determining whether their coverage is biased and for considering the potential for bias in any sources or tools, AI related or not»**

we really want to protect, including our covers that get produced and show up in posters, frame shops, t-shirts, and not always authorized. On the other side, we publish material that relies on the concept of fair use, because it comments on prior art, or transforms it in some significant way. So sometimes we have to assert our own rights to use prior work in a way that is covered by fair use. Part of my job is to make sure that when we do that, we are doing it thoughtfully. Of course, part of the complexity is that the legal doctrine of fair use is constantly evolving under American law.

**Do you see AI as a threat or an opportunity in maintaining and even strengthening public trust in media organizations?**

AI, with its ability to create realistic images and video of entirely fabricated events (so called «deep fakes»), presents a serious challenge to public trust in media, which has been in decline for several years, even before the general availability of AI systems. Furthermore, the task of regulating this issue presents real conflicts with legitimate uses of AI to create parody, art, and other protected speech. On the other hand, AI can sift through vast quantities of data and public information that is currently available, but which doesn't come to light because of the lack of local media outlets and resources. Things like quarterly reports of corporations, government campaign finance reports, and government meetings are ripe for AI synthesis, indexing, and discovering relevant connections that may otherwise remain unknown. The

human element, however, is paramount to verifying and checking that information prior to publication.

**Let's say journalists use AI to assist them in editing, "unstuck" ideas, etc. What legal or ethical safeguards are in place to prevent AI tools bias in the journalistic content? Is it up to each journalist's ethics or should there be a legal guideline on that?**

It's up to the media outlet to come up with guidelines that apply to the journalists' work. Oftentimes, the legal department is involved in establishing ethical guidelines, but it's part of an editorial discussion as well. Currently, the Poynter Institute has a template for guidelines that may be useful. Again, humans are ultimately responsible for determining whether their coverage is biased and for considering the potential for bias in any sources or tools, AI related or not.

**Within the media industry, AI capabilities and the legal department, what do you think can be controlled in the editorial responsibility?**

I think the media outlets, to preserve their credibility and integrity, have to be responsible for the content they publish. This does not mean that media companies can't use AI, but they should do so thoughtfully, and with full disclosure to readers and news consumers. This comes down to making sure humans are making editorial decisions and that material is fact-checked and vetted by humans before publication. ■



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## SAVE THE DATE

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# GUADALAJARA



### WEDNESDAY, 29 OCTOBER

- Opening Ceremony

### THURSDAY, 30 OCTOBER

- Main theme 1: Present and Future of Foreign Investment Dispute Resolution
- International Bar Leaders' Senate
- Informal reception

### FRIDAY, 31 OCTOBER

- Main theme 2: Agrifood, Sustainability and International Trade
- Gala dinner

### SATURDAY, 1 NOVEMBER

- Special Session - Human Rights and Climate Emergency; Business and Human Rights
- Closing ceremony

### SUNDAY, 2 NOVEMBER

- General excursion

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# iCorporate: the new firm from iCapital

**Miguel Ángel García Brito, founding partner, and Christian Domínguez, partner, explain the strategic vision of the group's new firm**

by julia gil



In today's complex economic environment—marked by uncertainty and a slowdown in global mergers and acquisitions—launching an M&A boutique might, at first glance, seem like a counter-cyclical move. However, according to iCapital's partners, as they explain to *Iberian Lawyer*, the creation of iCorporate was a necessary step. "iCorporate was born out of a real need identified within our own ecosystem," says **Miguel Ángel García Brito**, founding partner of iCapital and one of the driving forces behind the new firm. "Many of our clients—mainly large family offices and religious institutions—also hold corporate and real estate assets, which are often the source of their financial capital. Over time, and thanks to the trust built, they began to raise needs that went beyond financial advisory, such as selling a business, financing growth or divesting from property." The result is an advisory firm focused on mid-sized and small-scale corporate transactions, operating within an independent group that manages more than €4.2 billion in financial assets.

## THE START

Since its launch in May 2025 ([link to the story](#)), iCorporate—part of the group's Next 5 strategic plan—has started operations with a pipeline that includes both existing clients and new profiles not previously linked to the parent company. "We are currently managing between 15 and 20 sale and financing mandates, around 75% of which come from existing clients and 25% from external ones," García Brito explains. To date, one deal has been closed, and the firm expects to complete between two and four more by the end of the year. Beyond the volume of activity, the partners highlight the profile of their initial mandates as a defining feature. They point to long-standing relationships with clients as a key factor. "Clients' needs don't wait. Many of them are family-owned businesses, and matters such as succession or divestment don't always align with the economic cycle," notes **Christian Domínguez**, partner at the firm. The broader economic environment also plays a role. Many companies, particularly after the pandemic, took on short-term debt—such as ICO-backed loans—and are now, amid high interest rates and tighter access to credit, seeking refinancing or

new capital to resume growth plans. "The truth is, there's liquidity and investment capacity; what's lacking is visibility and confidence to make decisions," Domínguez adds.

## BEYOND THE TRANSACTION

The firm notes that its approach to transactions goes beyond deal execution, starting with an early assessment of whether conditions are right. "Our differentiating value lies in long-term client relationships. We don't operate on a purely transactional basis or for one-off mandates," Domínguez says. "If we identify that a sale won't create the expected value, we prefer to pause or redirect the process, always prioritising the client's best interest." This shapes what the firm

## ICAPITAL IN FIGURES

**2006**  
Founded

**70**  
Team

**50**  
Advisors

**€4.2 billion**  
Advisory volume

**10+ LATAM DESK**  
Oficinas en España

**165**  
Clients (70 religious institutions)

calls the “before, during and after” model—an advisory process that begins even before a mandate is signed. “Some of the operations we’re executing today began taking shape two years ago: we analysed the sector, prepared the company, and waited for the right moment to maximise value,” explains García Brito. Flexibility, they note, is also part of the model. While the firm can manage most operations internally, it collaborates with external advisors when specific contexts require it. “When we deal with highly specialised sectors or companies whose potential investors are in markets we don’t directly access, we delegate those parts to specialist firms to ensure strong execution,” says Domínguez. An example is the entry of Manolo Bakes into the VGO Capital fund, executed in collaboration with an international advisory firm ([see deal link](#)). “Our role is to advise the client throughout—from selecting the advisors to closing the deal. That’s why we set up meetings between the client and shortlisted candidates to ensure the right chemistry, which ultimately consolidates the trust needed to move forward,” he adds.

## OTHER PILLARS

Understanding the client profile is also central to the firm’s advisory model. “Many times, we’re talking about someone’s life’s work,” García Brito reflects. In the case of religious institutions, their mission also imposes an ethical and purpose-

**«The truth is that there is liquidity and investment capacity; what is lacking is visibility and security to make decisions»**

**Christian Domínguez**

**«iCorporate was born out of a real need detected within our own ecosystem»**

**Miguel Ángel García Brito**

driven framework. “Their wealth serves a very specific purpose, and our responsibility is to ensure it’s managed in line with that mission,” he adds.

The firm integrates technology into various stages of its advisory process. “We use valuation tools that help us estimate company value based on comparable market transactions—especially useful at the beginning of a sale process, so the client can have a clear benchmark,” says García Brito. Automation tools are also used to handle repetitive tasks and improve efficiency. “Not to replace judgement, but to save time where possible and focus attention where it’s most needed.”

The leadership team brings experience from banking, corporate finance, and strategy consulting. “We consider ourselves a family that works across a range of operations—from smaller deals to more global ones—allowing our professionals to build a broad view of the sector,” García Brito says. Hiring remains a key area of investment. “We’ve made a significant commitment in the HR area, and we’ll continue expanding as activity demands it. Attracting top-level professionals is one of the cornerstones of our model.”

## ICORPORATE TEAM

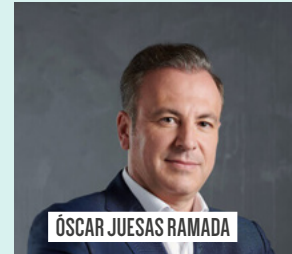
### FOUNDING PARTNERS:



MIGUEL ÁNGEL GARCÍA BRITO



PABLO MARTÍNEZ-ARRARÁS



ÓSCAR JUESAS RAMADA

### PARTNERS



CHRISTIAN DOMÍNGUEZ

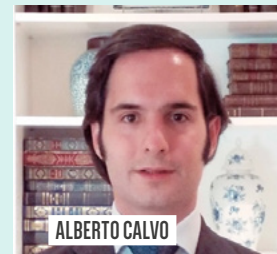


CARLOS DÍAZ

### ANALYSTS



FERNANDO PÉREZ DE TUDELA




ALBERTO CALVO

## LONG-TERM OUTLOOK

Although iCapital already operates in Latin America—with offices in Mexico, Colombia and Peru—iCorporate's current expansion plans are focused exclusively on Spain. "Our focus is fully on consolidating ourselves in the Spanish market. There's still a lot to be done here: building our brand, generating trust and earning a firm position in the sector," García Brito states. At present, the firm is committed to a progressive

growth strategy, aligned with market evolution and client needs. "Some of our Latin American clients may wish to operate in Spain. If and when they do, iCorporate will be ready to accompany them," he adds.

This steady, deliberate approach also reflects the firm's long-term view. "We were born in a complex moment, and from day one we've seen real traction. What we've learned is that market cycles shift—but trust, when built properly, endures." 

# World Compliance Association

## Compliance and data protection: a relationship that demands coordination free of duplication and overlap

by manuel del palacio\*



Organizations today are subject to a complex and exhaustive regulatory framework, accompanied by an environment where concepts such as sustainability and impact are emerging. This has led to the emergence of new professionals to ensure proper compliance and effective commitment from entities. I would like to highlight two key roles responsible for essential pillars within our organizations: the Compliance Officer and the Data Protection Officer (DPO).

Due to the nature of their mandates, each must address different areas that risk overlapping. Therefore, they

must learn to collaborate by clearly defining their boundaries, turning potential conflict into opportunity. Defining functions is not just an organizational matter but a legal safeguard for the entity itself.

Both roles share a preventive vision, provide internal advisory functions, and play a key role in oversight. They cannot be merged or interchanged. Confusing their functions can lead to serious dysfunctions that affect both regulatory compliance and the effective protection of individuals' rights.

The Data Protection Officer operates as a cross-functional



role within organizations and is tasked with overseeing the application of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in Spain, along with the Organic Law on Data Protection and Guarantee of Digital Rights (LOPDGDD) and other applicable regulations. The DPO must support the organization in decision-making involving personal data processing from an independent, proactive, and non-subordinate position. They must ensure that personal data processing complies with current regulations, support Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs), advise on responses to data subject rights, and maintain communication with the supervisory authority as the main point of contact. Additionally, they should be involved in reviewing contracts with data processors and in security breach notification procedures, always offering a perspective aligned with the principle of proactive responsibility.

The Compliance Officer, on the other hand, is responsible for promoting the implementation and development of the compliance management system, enabling the organization to effectively identify, prevent, manage, and mitigate legal risks. Their scope includes both areas formally recognized in the organizational chart as independent control or oversight units and others that, while not formally designated, are

linked to compliance. This includes areas such as anti-money laundering, child protection, transparency, and whistleblower channel oversight, among others. Like the DPO, the Compliance Officer must be a cross-functional figure, known and accessible throughout the organization.

Therefore, the role of the Compliance Officer is to ensure that the compliance system integrates the GDPR as a cross-cutting regulation without encroaching on the DPO's responsibilities. This involves ensuring that the Data Protection Management System (DPMS) is integrated into the Compliance System, overseeing cross-functional risks, and anticipating conflicts of interest. Both roles require a joint vision of legal, technological, and operational risks to address data processing with a comprehensive perspective.

Working hand-in-hand, these professionals can ensure that one defines the DPMS while the other ensures that policies align with the rest of the system—whether it be the ethics channel, AML/CFT, or the disciplinary code. Special emphasis should be placed on ensuring that decisions affecting personal data follow established procedures. Their collaboration creates an opportunity for effective management within organizations. In this regard, the Compliance Officer must ensure that the DPO's

involvement is consulted and documented, integrating them into decision-making and facilitating two-way communication. Cooperation must be based on objective criteria, traceable documentation, and an approach aligned with the principles of legality, fairness, and transparency.

The Compliance Officer does not replace the DPO nor is responsible for GDPR compliance, but they are responsible for ensuring its proper integration into the compliance system, coordinating with the DPO, and preventing dysfunctions, contradictions, or breaches resulting from disconnected management. Their value lies in ensuring that the regulatory system functions cohesively, without duplications or gaps.

In compliance, as in many other areas, what is not organized becomes disorganized—and in organizations, disorder can lead to sanctions, loss of trust, reputation, and social legitimacy.

*\*Managing partner at PerseveraGrupo board member of the World Compliance Association*

# Women in a Legal World

## Israel-Gaza: International responses amidst a humanitarian crisis

by sandra aroni marín\*



On July 28, 2025, reports confirmed that Israeli military actions in Gaza resulted in the deaths of 98 people within just a few hours. Similar attacks over recent months, including the bombing of Gaza's only Catholic church on July 17, and an assault near a food

distribution center that left over 50 Palestinians dead in June, illustrate a deeply troubling pattern. The scale and intensity of these attacks strongly suggest one of the gravest violations of human rights and international humanitarian law witnessed in the 21st century.

In response, international bodies and world leaders have taken several measures. The United Nations General Assembly issued Resolution A/ES-10/L.34 on June 12, 2025, demanding an immediate, conditional, and permanent ceasefire. The resolution condemns the use of starvation as a method of warfare and the obstruction of humanitarian aid. It calls for the unhindered

entry of food, medicine, water, fuel, and assistance to Gaza, urging all parties to respect international humanitarian and human rights law. Importantly, it emphasizes the obligation to investigate violations and end impunity, while calling on Member States to ensure Israel complies with its obligations. This resolution, sponsored by countries including Chile, Egypt, Spain, and the State of Palestine, reinforces the UN's permanent responsibility for the Palestinian question until a comprehensive solution is achieved under international law.

Within the European Union, efforts to hold Israel accountable have gained

momentum. In May 2025, 17 out of 27 EU foreign ministers supported reviewing Article 2 of the EU-Israel Association Agreement, which requires respect for human rights and democratic values. This review aims to assess whether Israel's obstruction of humanitarian aid constitutes a breach. Discussions also include the possible partial suspension of Israel's participation in the Horizon Europe research program, notably the European Innovation Council. While countries such as Spain and Ireland back these measures, others like Germany, Hungary, and the Czech Republic remain hesitant.

Commissioner Teresa Ribera described the humanitarian situation in Gaza as “dantesque and immoral,” comparing the images of hunger to the liberation of Auschwitz. She condemned the EU's inability to act decisively due to the lack of consensus, calling for consistency with European values. The EU coordinates with member states and international partners to facilitate urgent humanitarian aid and supports multiyear reconstruction plans for Gaza. Individual European governments have also taken clear stances. Spain has called for the immediate cessation of bombings as a precondition to release hostages and alleviate the humanitarian crisis. It has committed to sending 12 tons of food aid by air and is organizing the medical transfer of 13 Gazan children to Spanish hospitals. France

has pushed for reviewing and potentially suspending cooperation with Israel if human rights commitments are not met. The United Kingdom, under Prime Minister Keir Starmer, led the initial air deliveries of aid and plans to increase daily truck convoys to Gaza. Germany's Chancellor Friedrich Merz announced a coordinated humanitarian airlift with the UK, France, and Jordan, alongside preparations for a Gaza reconstruction conference.

These responses differ in scope and urgency from the UN resolution, reflecting the complexities of international diplomacy. While the UN provides a formal framework demanding ceasefire and humanitarian access, regional actors like the EU and its member states navigate political and economic considerations alongside human rights imperatives.

Meanwhile, former US President Donald Trump's position remains ambiguous and controversial. While not holding official office, Trump has publicly supported Israel's right to self-defense but has downplayed calls for immediate ceasefires. His rhetoric emphasizes security concerns and frames the conflict largely in terms of combating terrorism, with limited acknowledgment of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. This stance contrasts with the more interventionist and humanitarian-oriented

approaches of the UN and European actors.

In summary, the ongoing violence in Gaza, marked by repeated attacks on civilians and critical infrastructure, calls for urgent international action. The UN resolution sets a normative baseline demanding ceasefire and humanitarian access, while the EU and several member states are beginning to take concrete steps, albeit unevenly. A coordinated global response grounded in international law and human rights is essential to prevent further loss of life and pave the way for a sustainable resolution.

*\*Abogada por la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú*

## The coach approach

# How to avoid autopilot and redefine priorities in senior legal practice

by b rbara de eliseu



Every September, the legal world reawakens. The courts resume, clients return with renewed urgency, and inboxes overflow. For many senior lawyers, this *rentr e* marks yet another cycle in a long professional journey — a cycle that often begins on autopilot.

After years or even decades of practice, it's easy to fall into well-rehearsed patterns: familiar routines, old habits, and a reactive approach to work. But this automatic mode of operation, though efficient in the short term, often conceals deeper fatigue, professional stagnation, or misalignment between what one does and what one truly values.

September, then, is not just a restart — it's an invitation to reassess. And for senior lawyers, this reassessment is not a luxury. It is a necessity. Recognising the symptoms

of autopilot it is often a hard mission, because autopilot does not announce itself dramatically. It creeps in silently, often disguised as competence. Meetings are attended, emails are answered, cases are managed — all without much friction. But over time, signs begin to surface:

- A loss of intellectual curiosity, where everything feels repetitive or mechanical;
- An unexamined acceptance of client work, without questioning whether it aligns with one's values, strengths, or fees;
- A calendar filled reactively, not strategically, leading to a constant feeling of urgency and lack of control;
- A sense of emotional



detachment, even when winning cases or closing deals.

These are not signs of failure. They are signs of over-competence, of a career so well mastered that it no longer challenges or nourishes.

Seniority is often equated with status or influence. But in coaching experienced lawyers, I see that seniority also carries a different — often hidden — weight: the burden of past decisions. The practice areas chosen years ago, the types of clients cultivated, the fee models established, the cultural norms absorbed from the profession... all of these shape a lawyer's current professional identity.

But what if that identity is no longer fulfilling?

Redefining priorities at this stage is not about reinvention. It's about reclaiming authorship.

Many lawyers accept September as the beginning of an inevitable "busy season". Diaries fill up. Priorities are pushed aside. Strategy is postponed. *"I'll think about this in December"* becomes the default. But this narrative is a choice, and a limiting one.

If you wait for the "perfect time" to reassess, you may never get to it. The *rentrée* is not a barrier to reflection; it is the context that most demands it.

Here are four powerful questions to redefine professional priorities, that can help any senior lawyer move from autopilot to conscious leadership of their career:

1. What kind of work do I no longer want to do? Letting go is often harder than taking on new work. But clarity often starts with subtraction. What cases, client profiles, or internal roles have become misaligned with your values or mission?
2. Which clients energise me the most and why? Beyond profitability, pay attention to emotional resonance. Which files spark engagement? Which clients respect boundaries, value your judgment, or bring intellectual stimulation?
3. Am I using my seniority strategically, or just operationally? Are you leveraging your experience to choose, delegate, influence, and lead? Or are you still playing the same game with higher stakes?
4. What would make this judicial year feel meaningful? Not successful. Not productive. Meaningful. A shift in language that opens space for different answers and,

consequently, different actions.

One of the core shifts for experienced lawyers is moving from being merely active to being impactful. This does not mean doing more. It means doing what matters more, with greater intention.

Sometimes, this means renegotiating your role within your law firm. Sometimes, it means raising your fees. Sometimes, it means finally saying no to that client who drains you. Or mentoring younger lawyers in a way that nourishes you, not just them.

Every choice counts. But no choice can be made consciously while on autopilot.

In my coaching work, I often hear the sentence: "It's not that bad." And indeed, most senior lawyers are not on the brink of burnout. They're functioning. They're respected. They are, from the outside, successful.

But mediocrity rarely announces itself with crisis. It settles in with comfort. And comfort, over time, becomes inertia.

Inertia is the real risk of autopilot. Not dramatic failure, but quiet disconnection from the very reasons that led you into law in the first place.

September is not just another month. It is a mirror. What will you choose to see?



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#### Editor-in-Chief

ilaria.iaquinta@iberianlegalgroup.com

#### In collaboration with

julia.gil@iberianlegalgroup.com  
mercedes.galan@iberianlegalgroup.com  
gloria.paiva@iberianlegalgroup.com

#### Contributor

ilaria iaquinta, sandra aroni marín, manuel del palacio,  
ingrid furtado, michela cannovale,  
nicola di molfetta, bábara de eliseu

#### Group Editor-in-Chief

nicola.dimolfetta@lcpublishinggroup.com

#### Office Manager

carlos.donaire@iberianlegalgroup.com

#### Graphic Designer

francesco.inchingolo@lcpublishinggroup.com  
andrea.cardinale@lcpublishinggroup.com  
riccardo.sisti@lcpublishinggroup.com

#### Group Conference Manager

anna.palazzo@iberianlegalgroup.com

#### CEO

aldo.scaringella@lcpublishinggroup.com

#### General Manager and Group HR Director

stefania.bonfanti@lcpublishinggroup.com

#### Group Communication and Business Development Director

helene.thiery@lcpublishinggroup.com

#### Group CFO

valentina.pozzi@lcpublishinggroup.com

#### Group Marketing and Sales Manager

chiara.segghi@lcpublishinggroup.com

#### Marketing & Sales Department

alessia.fuschini@lcpublishinggroup.com

#### Events Executive

chiara.rasarivo@lcpublishinggroup.com

#### Events Department

anna.balduzzi@lcpublishinggroup.com

#### Editor

Oficina registrada:  
C/ Rios Rosas, 44 A - 2º G.H  
28003 Madrid, Spain  
T: + 34 91 563 3691  
info@iberianlawyer.com  
www.iberianlawyer.com  
www.thelatinamericanlawyer.com

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