



Almudena Álvarez:

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Almudena Álvarez is an Attorney-at-law and *Abogada*. Admitted to practice law in Spain and in the state of New York. She has studied at *Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*, *Universität zu Köln*, and University of Miami. She also holds a degree in Political Science and Administration, an LL.M. in international and US Law, and a diploma in Business Management and Strategic Planning. Before founding *álvarez lentner* (an employment law boutique law firm in Madrid), she used to be a Senior Associate at ONTIER. She has work experience in Germany, Belgium, and the United States. She is also a lecturer at *Universidad Rey Juan Carlos*, and she is often a speaker at AIJA and different chambers of commerce in Spain. She is currently a member of the Board of Directors of ELLINT. She can work in Spanish, English, German, and French.

In September 2024, Madrid will take center stage in the global legal discourse with the hosting of the 62nd International Young Lawyers' Congress of the International Association of Young Lawyers (AIJA), titled "Thinking Globally – The Role of International Lawyers in a World Searching for Answers".

In this context, The Legal Industry Reviews had the pleasure of interviewing Almudena Álvarez, Co-Chair of the Organising Committee of AIJA's Annual Congress in Madrid, who provides an insider's perspective on the preparation and anticipated impact of this event on the legal community, both locally and internationally.

Firstly, and to give our readers some context, Could you tell us about the International Association of Young Lawyers? What is the association's mission, and what inspired you to be a part of it?

AIJA is a **real international** association of young lawyers, well, young until 45, with **more than 4,000 members** coming from **more than 100 countries**. It is very **welcoming and inclusive**, and it does not matter whether you are a junior associate or a junior partner, whether you come from a big or a small law firm, **all members are equally important and so are treated**. The academic program is very interesting (and the

way it is conducted even more: performances, interactive quizzes, podcasts, etc.) but for me the **social program is the key**: you get to go to venues you will never see by yourself (which makes it an **extraordinary personal experience**) and you get to spend quality time with the attendees, who usually become later your friends (it is not about exchanging cards; it is about **establishing long-term connections so you have no doubts when referring your colleagues to your clients**). In my opinion, AIJA also **enhances your visibility as a lawyer**, not just internationally but also within your law firm, as you can actively participate as a speaker, moderator, member of the organizing committee, etc.

As a Co-Chair of the Organizing Committee of the Annual Congress of the International Association of Young Lawyers in Madrid, how has it been preparing this event and what impact do you hope the congress will have on the legal community, particularly young lawyers?

Organizing a congress is a lot of fun. You get to work on things that are in no way related to your daily work as a lawyer, and I like that. From deciding on the venues, DJs, food...to the search of sponsorship to make it happen (the hardest part is to chase for money). The pitfall would be having to work as lawyer at the same time; it is hard but feasible.

I think the congress itself will have an impact on the country (Spain) – we are aiming for more than 1,000 attendees – and of course also on our local young community of lawyers because they can become aware – without leaving the city – of the vast opportunities out there to **increase their business/clients**. In addition, it is very interesting to see that lawyers from far away jurisdictions have the same problems as you do (dealing with clients, judges, invoicing, managing employees, etc.); sharing this type of daily problems/issues is **very comforting**.

In your opinion, what are some of the most pressing challenges facing young lawyers in the European Union today, and how can organizations like the International Association of Young Lawyers support them in overcoming these challenges?

Well, **work-life balance, mental health, bringing clients** to the law firm, etc. are issues that lawyers (young and not that young) face worldwide – regardless of your country, type of law firm, etc. I personally have worked for small, medium, and big law firms and...listen...same issues. Now I have my own law firm and I have more flexibility, but the rest of the issues are still there. AIJA can help you navigate those issues through very interesting seminars, coaching sessions, podcasts, etc. and of course, the most obvious fact, it helps increasing your network and therefore your clients/revenue.





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Balancing your roles as a lawyer, educator, and organizer must require adept leadership skills. How do you approach leadership, especially in a field as dynamic and multifaceted as law?

To be honest, I am so busy that I do not think very much about it. Not even now that I am rethinking the question...but I guess that being **organized** (you must see the number of to-do-lists that I have), **effective, fast-thinker, pragmatic, flexible,** and specially **setting an example,** help in becoming a better leader in this quadruple-role of managing partner, lawyer, professor, and organizer. In my opinion, making the workplace a "nice place to be" and rewarding the employees with flexibility and time off allows the leader to do "leader-things". I would not be able to do that many things if I had a terrible team – so thank you, team, if you are reading this. Involving the team in making decisions related to the managing of the law firm – even if they are not partners – strengthens the sense of belonging, which usually positively impacts on their work quality. Being nice with your team/students does not mean being weak or pushover; I am actually very strict and demanding, but always with a smile, a joke, and of course, manners.

Being a professor at Rey Juan Carlos University, you play a vital role in shaping the next generation of legal professionals. What are some key principles or values you strive to instill in your students as they navigate their legal careers?

Perseverance (in general but in particular when representing clients before a court of law; at least in Spain we really have to face a lot of pressure when we are at court arguing with the judge or other civil servants), **client first** (even

if you do not have a winning case you have to fight it to the end), **pay attention to the facts** not just the law when analyzing a problem, and **work/study hard** (let's not forget that we are lawyers so we always need to be updated about new case law, legal opinions, laws, etc. we are basically selling our brains).

The legal landscape is constantly evolving, influenced by factors such as technology, globalization, and societal shifts. How do you stay abreast of these changes, and what advice would you give to young lawyers looking to adapt and thrive in this dynamic environment?

Let's be **open to changes,** let's **embrace them,** do not ignore them. However, I still **do not see any substitute for our brains,** so I think our profession is still on a safe harbor, but technology can help us in becoming more efficient if wisely used.

Lastly, could you share a memorable experience or achievement from your career that has been particularly rewarding or impactful for you, and what lessons have you drawn from it?

Passing the New York Bar. I was already a practicing lawyer in Spain (and had a job) when I decided to go to the US and enroll in a LL.M program, which allowed me to become a US attorney – while I was working remotely. Becoming a lawyer in a foreign country is quite an experience (to avoid saying nightmare) but it is even more challenging if you have to study law in a foreign language and specially law of a common-law country, when coming, as myself, from a civil-law country. The lesson: perseverance and hard work always pay off.



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