

**INDUSTRY REPORT**  
**LEGAL**

JULY 2025

**ie**  
**UNIVERSITY**  
TALENT & CAREERS

# AGENDA

1. Industry Overview
2. Impact of Global & Regional Trends
3. Sector-specific Insights
4. Top Employers and Strategic Partnerships
5. Talent Needs and Recruitment Trends
6. Recruitment Timelines by Industry
7. Alumni Insights and Success Stories
8. Data/Resources - Bibliography



# Industry Overview

The global legal sector is undergoing a profound transformation, shaped by digital disruption, regulatory innovation, shifting generational expectations, and the internationalization of legal services.

This report has been developed by the Employer Partnerships team of the legal sector to better understand and analyze the most relevant trends shaping the legal employment landscape, both in Spain and internationally. It combines market data, alumni outcomes, employer feedback, and strategic insights to provide a clear picture of:

- Current global and regional trends impacting the legal industry
- Key practice areas and emerging legal roles
- Employer segmentation and recruitment strategies
- Talent development needs and generational shifts in career expectations
- Strategic goals and priorities for IE's legal sector positioning

The goal is to ensure that we remain a reference for forward-thinking legal education and talent development. Capable of connecting students with opportunities across both established and emerging legal career paths.



# Impact of Global and Regional Trends

## 2.1 Global Trends Shaping the Legal Sector

Legal professionals around the world are responding to a shared set of global shifts, which are reshaping the fundamentals of legal service delivery and talent needs:

- **Digital Transformation & Legal Tech Adoption:** AI-powered tools are now widely integrated into contract review, eDiscovery, document drafting, and litigation analytics. Automation is expected to impact up to 73% of legal tasks, leading to role redefinition across law firms and legal departments.
- **Remote and Hybrid Legal Workflows:** The normalization of remote work is redefining traditional legal employment models.
- **Regulatory Expansion:** Intensified regulation around AI, sustainability, and data privacy is placing compliance at the core of legal strategies.
- **Globalization vs. Localization:** Cross-border work is increasing, but successful legal practice often still requires adaptation to local qualifications, languages, and regulatory systems. Creating a growing need for hybrid international-local legal profiles.
- **Specialization and Market Consolidation:** Law firms are increasingly focused on building niche practice areas, such as climate law, IP and Legal Tech, international trade... among others. And targeting high-growth segments through boutique and mid-sized structures.

## 2.2 European Legal Market Trends

Europe is at the forefront of regulatory innovation, particularly in emerging areas such as AI governance and sustainability law. Key regional trends include:

- **Implementation of the EU AI Act:** Expected to become the first comprehensive regulatory framework for artificial intelligence, this will shape demand for legal experts capable of advising on algorithmic transparency, risk classification, and accountability.
- **Expansion of ESG and Sustainability Reporting Requirements:** Regulations such as the CSRD (Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive) are creating a new wave of ESG-related legal roles, especially in risk, disclosure, and compliance advisory.



## 2.3 Legal Trends in Spain

While shaped by European dynamics, the Spanish legal market presents its own specific trends and structural characteristics:

- **Local Qualification as a Barrier to Entry:** To practice in ranked Spanish law firms, it remains essential to be locally qualified. The “Máster de Acceso a la Abogacía” and summer internship programs continue to be key entry points for junior talent.
- **Growing Role of In-House Legal Teams:** There is increasing demand for in-house legal professionals, especially within IBEX35 companies and regulated sectors such as energy, banking, and infrastructure. This shift reflects a broader push for greater strategic alignment and control over legal processes.
- **Demand for Specialized Mid-Level Talent:** Mid-level lawyers (3–5 years of experience) are in demand in areas such as corporate, real estate, energy, and IP law.
- **Legal Tech and Digital Skills on the Rise:** Spanish law firms are accelerating the adoption of legal tech tools and increasingly value junior candidates who bring digital literacy, including familiarity with legal automation, contract management platforms, and basic data analytics.
- **Recruitment Remains Relationship-Based:** While Spain’s legal recruitment market is modernizing, referrals and university-firm connections still play a key role—underscoring the importance of events like IE’s Legal Talent Fair and employer engagement strategies.



# Sector-Specific Insights

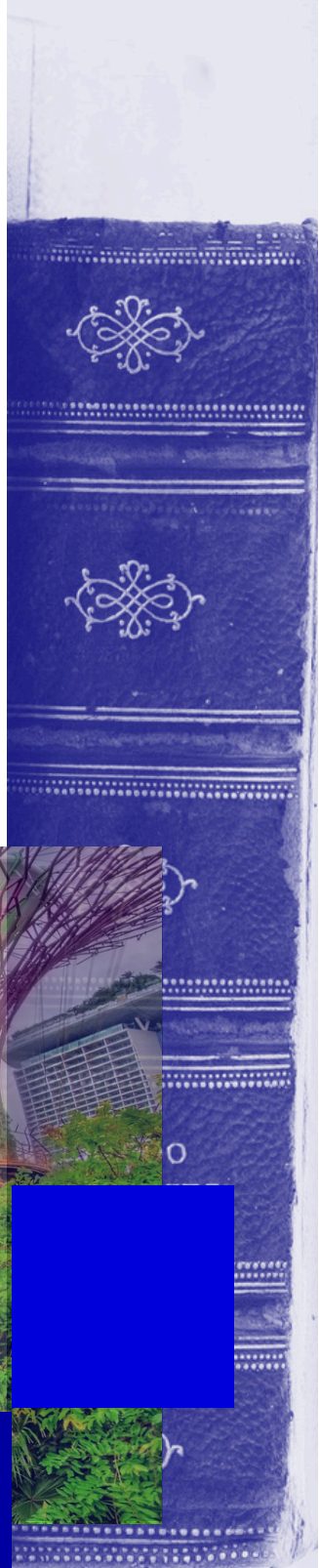
# 3

To fulfill the growing demand for international opportunities among our students—and in line with the international growth trajectory of IE Law School. It is essential to prioritize those areas of the legal sector that are globally relevant. However, it's equally important to acknowledge that legal practice remains local in many jurisdictions. Barriers such as jurisdiction-specific qualifications, language proficiency, and regulatory requirements often limit a graduate's ability to practice law abroad in a traditional sense.

- **Banking and Finance (including Funds):** Legal professionals in this sector are increasingly required to navigate complex regulatory landscapes, advise on cross-border investments, and support financial structuring for international clients. Areas such as investment funds, project finance, and structured finance demand a strong understanding of both legal principles and financial markets.
- **Corporate and Commercial Law:** Cross-border M&A activity and the restructuring of global supply chains have made transactional law increasingly complex. Legal advisors are expected to deliver strategic value beyond contract review. Often collaborating closely with finance, HR, and risk departments, specially in in-house departments.
- **Regulatory and Compliance:** One of the fastest-growing areas, compliance law is being transformed by increased regulatory scrutiny. Companies need legal experts who understand not only national laws but also supranational directives, particularly in data privacy, anti-money laundering, and digital commerce. In-house legal teams are expanding, and so is the demand for lawyers with interdisciplinary skills in regulation, technology, and ethics.
- **Litigation, Arbitration and Dispute Resolution:** Despite automation, litigation/arbitration as an alternative model remains resilient. However, it is increasingly informed by predictive analytics and litigation funding models.
- **Intellectual Property and Technology Law:** IP law is experiencing renewed relevance due to increased innovation in AI. Startups and tech giants alike require robust legal frameworks for IP protection, licensing, and risk mitigation. Additionally, the rise of AI governance and tech ethics as legal domains has opened new practice areas, particularly for professionals who understand both the law and emerging technologies.



- Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Law: ESG is transitioning from a voluntary best practice to a regulatory requirement in many industries. Legal departments now have to advise on everything from climate risk disclosures to human rights audits in global supply chains. ESG compliance roles require legal knowledge, but also an ability to collaborate with sustainability officers, communications teams, and external stakeholders.
- Public and Human Rights Law: Issues such as refugee rights, climate justice, and digital privacy are gaining legal prominence. IE alumni have increasingly engaged in this space through work with international organizations like the UN, WTO, and NGOs. This field requires both legal acumen and a strong understanding of global policy and advocacy.



# Top Employers and Strategic Partnerships

It is essential to distinguish between different categories of strategic employers. These groups reflect not only who is actively hiring, but also who supports IE Law School's long-term positioning in global legal markets.

## 4.1 Top Recruiting Law Firms and Institutional Employers (National & International)

IE Law School continues to benefit from robust placement activity with a range of high-volume recruiters across the legal industry, both globally and within Spain.

### International Law Firms

Top-tier global firms—especially those involved in cross-border transactional work and regulatory practice. These include: Clifford Chance, Allen & Overy, Freshfields, Linklaters, Latham & Watkins, White & Case, and Baker McKenzie. These firms prioritize candidates with international profiles, strong academic credentials, and multilingual skills. IE students regularly access these opportunities through the Legal Talent Fair, LL.M. programs, and international visits.

### Big Four Professional Services Firms

The Big Four—PwC, Deloitte, EY, and KPMG—are among the largest employers of IE Law School graduates. They consistently recruit across practice areas such as tax, compliance, corporate advisory, and digital law.

### Leading Spanish Law Firms

IE Law School has built strong partnerships over the years with major Spanish firms including:

Uría Menéndez, Cuatrecasas, Garrigues, Pérez-Llorca, Broseta, Ramón y Cajal, and ECIJA.

These firms continue to hire talent for internships, Master de Acceso training contracts, and associate-level roles. Their ongoing support reinforces IE's brand nationally, especially among Master de Acceso and undergraduate law students.



4

## 4.2 Strategic Employers Across Sectors (Corporate, Public & NGO)

Beyond traditional law firms, IE students are increasingly entering legal and legal-adjacent roles across a range of sectors:

Multinational Corporations (e.g., Repsol, Iberdrola, Santander, Amadeus, Amazon, Microsoft, Roche) recruit legal professionals into in-house legal, compliance, risk, and ESG teams.

International Organizations (e.g., WTO, UN, IOM, EU institutions) offer roles in international public law, regulatory affairs, and policy advisory. Particularly relevant for students in the LL.M. and Master in Legal Studies programs.

NGOs and Foundations focused on human rights, refugee law, environmental law, and development have become growing destinations for students seeking careers in legal advocacy and policy implementation. These organizations are especially important for students who wish to work in an international environment without the requirement of local bar admission, and who can apply legal knowledge in policy-driven or corporate strategy contexts.

## 4.3 Priority Markets and IE's International Legal Hubs

There are several international hubs where legal demand is growing and where employer engagement efforts are concentrated:

- **Benelux:** Strong potential in Brussels and Luxembourg for placements in international law, EU regulation, and public affairs. Key employer partners include Cleary Gottlieb, Arendt, Van Campen Liem.
- **London:** A key location for Magic Circle law firms, boutique international practices, and in-house roles.
- **New York:** Targeted for roles in litigation, arbitration, and tech law. Annual visits and partnerships are expanding.
- **Riyadh:** A fast-growing legal market.
- **Paris & Geneva:** Important hubs for public international law, trade law, human rights, and multilateral institutions. Geneva also serves as a strategic access point to United Nations-related placements.

Through on-site visits, employer events, externship programs, and alumni activation, we are building ecosystems of opportunity across these locations to support long-term placement outcomes and global visibility.



# Talent Needs and Recruitment Trends

5

The legal sector is also undergoing a deep transformation in how it defines and attracts talent. Employers are no longer just hiring for legal expertise, they are looking for versatile professionals who combine legal knowledge with digital fluency, adaptability, and a strong sense of purpose. These expectations reflect both the evolving demands of the legal market and the changing mindset of new generations entering the workforce.

## 5.1 What Employers Expect from Today's Legal Candidates

Employers consistently highlight a set of core competencies that are becoming non-negotiable when evaluating early-career legal talent. Based on feedback from law firms, multinational companies, and public institutions, candidates must be equipped with:

- Core Legal Knowledge, including among others:
  - Contract drafting and review
  - Understanding of corporate law, ESG, GDPR, and financial regulation
  - Legal research and case analysis
- Digital and Technological Skills, such as:
  - Fluency in legal tech platforms (e.g. case management, document automation)
  - Familiarity with digital transactions and AI applications in law
- Soft Skills, including:
  - Problem-solving and critical thinking
  - Multilingual communication and negotiation
  - Initiative, curiosity, and resilience in cross-cultural settings
- Professional Attitudes, such as:
  - Willingness to learn, proactive mindset, and business awareness
  - Employers also report valuing dual degree students that combine legal education with another technical knowledge. For example, "legal + X" profiles—law + data, law + business, law + sustainability. Which are increasingly relevant in non-traditional legal roles.



## 5.2 Most In-Demand Legal Roles

As the sector evolves, the following roles are among the most sought-after across law firms, corporations, and IGOs:

- AI Legal Analysts
- Compliance Officers (ESG, financial, data privacy)
- Legal Operations Managers
- Cybersecurity & Data Privacy Lawyers
- Digital Contract Specialists
- Litigation Analysts (with tech and funding knowledge)
- Regulatory Risk Advisors
- International Trade & Arbitration Lawyers
- Sustainability Counsel / Climate Risk Advisors

These roles reflect the growing importance of regulatory insight, digital tools, and cross-functional collaboration in the legal profession.

## 5.3 Market Dynamics: Challenges in Hiring & Retaining Young Talent

The legal sector is currently grappling with a generational shift. Law firms, in particular, face increasing difficulty in attracting and retaining talent, who often have different professional values than previous cohorts:

- Lower interest in traditional partner-track careers: Many candidates prioritize work-life balance, flexibility, and purpose over hierarchical advancement. They are less motivated by prestige and more focused on impact and inclusion.
- Desire for mission-driven work: Younger professionals show strong interest in ESG, tech-for-good, and human rights law—sometimes favoring public or cross-sector roles over private practice.
- Higher expectations for well-being and workplace culture: Candidates are increasingly selective, valuing supportive environments, mentorship, and mental health resources as much as compensation.
- Decreasing appeal of rigid models: The traditional “one-size-fits-all” career trajectory in big law firms appears outdated to many graduates, creating both a recruitment and retention challenge.

Meanwhile, in-house legal departments are growing, offering attractive alternatives to private practice. These roles provide broader exposure to business strategy, more structured working hours, and perceived stability. Although they too must adapt their recruitment strategies to appeal to the next generation-



## 5.4 Geographic Hotspots for Legal Careers

While Spain remains an important entry point for many of our students, especially those pursuing the Master de Acceso a la Abogacía, the expansion of IE's global legal footprint is closely aligned with market trends across key international hubs:

- **London:** Strong demand from Magic Circle and U.S. firms; continued relevance for students pursuing solicitor qualification.
- **New York:** High activity in M&A, tech law, arbitration, and regulatory practice—especially appealing to LLM and MILS graduates.
- **Brussels and Luxembourg:** Key hiring regions for competition law, investment funds, and EU institutional roles.
- **Paris and Geneva:** Centers for public international law, trade, human rights, and legal diplomacy.
- **Riyadh and Dubai:** Increasingly strategic for infrastructure, ESG, and cross-border commercial work—markets that value global education profiles.
- **Singapore and Hong Kong:** Hubs for arbitration, fintech regulation, and cross-border dealmaking in the Asia-Pacific region.

IE's alumni, employer partnerships, and academic programming continue to evolve in line with these regions ensuring our students remain competitive and globally mobile.



# Recruitment Timelines by Industry

Understanding the timing and structure of legal recruitment cycles is essential to preparing students for successful career outcomes. Unlike other industries, the legal sector operates with highly variable recruitment timelines depending on the employer type, jurisdiction, and practice area.

## 6.1 Full-Time Legal Roles: Structured Timelines, Especially for Law Firms

Most law firms, particularly international or large national firms, operate on structured recruitment calendars, which tend to follow two main peaks:

- First Quarter (January–March): new graduate roles and lateral hires.
- Third Quarter (September–November): A second wave of hiring, often coincides with back-to-school recruitment events, firm presentations, and final-year student outreach.

## 6.2 Internship and Early-Career Placements: Most Activity in Q2

Internships (both during and post-program) are often the most important entry point into the legal sector. In particular:

- April–June is the most active period for finalizing summer internships and pre-graduate placements. These last ones becoming more relevant in markets such as Spain, US, London, Paris...
- For Master de Acceso students, summer internships are frequently tied to qualification pathways and firm pipelines. **IMPORTANT:** For current students the placement begins in the Q4 of the year before commencing their internships.

IE students benefit from Legal Talent Fairs and partner referrals, but early preparation is essential. Especially for competitive firms where application windows open 8–10 months ahead of internship start dates.

## 6.3 Regional Timelines: Spain, U.S., and Other Jurisdictions

Legal recruitment timelines vary significantly by geography:

- Spain: Recruitment cycles are closely tied to the academic calendar, with a strong push in spring for summer internships and fall hiring for full-time roles. Master de Acceso qualification requires early planning.
- United Kingdom: Most firms recruit through structured “vacation schemes,” typically starting in summer for roles that begin 12–18 months.

6



later. Solicitor qualification route requires early planning.

- United States: U.S. firms follow a predictable calendar, with on-campus interviews and offers for summer associate roles starting as early as the fall semester of the penultimate year.
- Europe (Benelux, France, Switzerland): Varies by country, with boutique firms recruiting year-round and IGOs/NGOs often offering rolling deadlines.
- Middle East: Deadlines tend to be less formalized, but interviews and placements often happen on shorter notice. Personal referrals and local connections play a significant role.



# Alumni Insights and Success Stories

7

## Alumni Data

Over 7,000+ IE alumni are currently working in the legal sector – meaning international or national law firms, ALSP or legal consulting firms.

Alumni are present in key legal markets including Madrid, London, Brussels, Luxembourg, New York, Paris and Geneva among other locations.

## Alumni Success Stories

- **Notable Achievements:** IE graduates have advanced into leadership roles at firms such as Clifford Chance, Latham & Watkins, Pérez-Llorca, Cuatrecasas, and Uría Menéndez.
- **Policy & Advocacy Impact:** Alumni have and will continue contributing to international arbitration, public international law, and human rights litigation at international organizations.
- **Entrepreneurial Success:** Several alumni have launched their own law firms.

## Mentorship and Networking Opportunities

- Alumni actively support current students through career panels, legal workshops, alumni Q&A sessions, and mentorship programs.
- Many serve as internal referrers or hiring sponsors within their firms, particularly in Spain, Benelux, London, and New York.



# Data/Resources - Bibliography

8

## **Bloomberg Law Trends 2025**

- Key insights on litigation, AI regulation, ESG law, compliance, and practice of law
- Source for U.S. market trends, litigation finance, regulatory developments, and Gen Z in legal careers

## **Dentons Global AI Trends Report – Key Legal Issues for 2025**

- AI governance, procurement trends, IP risks, international regulation
- Insights on data privacy, AI compliance frameworks, and legal technology adoption

## **NA 2024 Legal Trends Report – Clio**

- Automation potential, hybrid billing models, AI usage in law firms
- Gen Z career expectations, legal tech adoption, shift in law firm business models

## **IE Law School – Sector Legal PPT (Internal Stakeholder Presentation)**

- Market segmentation, talent needs, employer feedback
- Strategic priorities and student pathways by geography and qualification system

## **IE Law School – AP Legal Sector 2025 Presentation (Account Plan)**

- Strategic goals by market (Benelux, Riyadh, NY, Geneva, etc.)
- Employer outreach, collaboration across IE departments, and in-house legal trends

## **Legal Report 2025 – Draft Document (Internal)**

- Original structure and baseline text
- Provided foundational content to be revised and expanded

## **Employer Feedback (Clifford Chance, Broseta, Écija, Macfarlanes, etc.)**

- Qualitative insights from HR partners and recruiters
- Perspectives on IE talent, student readiness, and profile differentiation

## **IE University Alumni Network**

- Placement data and career trajectories
- Alumni involvement in mentorship, employer partnerships, and curriculum feedback

## **Articles from: Legalcheek, Financial Times, Robert Half, El Confidencial, Cinco Días, Wolters Kluwer**

- Market trend indicators (especially for Spain) and employment outlook

