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Chambers DEI Global Report 2024

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Data Analysis

Submission analysis from Chambers DEI Awards by jurisdiction

Country	Firms nominated	Client References provided	Individuals nominated	Firm-wide programmes nominated
Brazil	38	182	51	71
Europe	38	169	26	57
Asia-Pacific and Greater China Region	31	140	15	45
USA	52	245	60	48
Latin America	82	378	95	160
Totals	241	1114	247	381

Introduction



Luke Vincett
DEI Manager

Since 2012 Chambers and Partners has been collecting submissions from law firms showcasing its DEI and pro bono programmes, initially as Chambers Women in Law and now as Chambers DEI. From the submissions we receive, the Chambers DEI team is tasked with picking out the very best initiatives, analysing their effectiveness and rewarding a deserving few at annual awards ceremonies. The awards began in the USA and now cover Latin America, Brazil, Europe, Asia Pacific and Greater China Region and, most recently, the UK Bar and solicitor sectors.

In 2021, starting again in the USA, we launched Chambers DEI Reports. These reports identify the top trends in DEI and pro bono initiatives from the submissions we receive in each region and collate them into a report of case studies and individual profiles that showcase best practice. The reports aim to provide readers with inspiration, practical tips and guidance on how to create, structure and run successful initiatives.

“Whatever the size, reach and practice of your firm, there is something in this Report for you.”

Our inaugural Chambers DEI Global Report 2024 features top themes and trends within the regions in which we collect submissions, covering USA, Latin America, Brazil, Europe, Asia Pacific and Greater China Region, and for the first time themes and trends that emerged globally. The Report is split into different chapters, first covering those global trends before focusing in on each region.

This landmark Report highlights the latest DEI and pro bono developments for each region, as well as offering insights on common themes emerging globally. Whatever the size, reach and practice of your firm, there is something in this Report for you. Each case study and profile covers how a firm's successful initiatives were established, the challenges it had to overcome and how it managed to achieve its aims. The common denominator in all the pieces included is absolute commitment to the cause, and a determination to make a difference.

“The common denominator in all the pieces included is absolute commitment to the cause, and a determination to make a difference.”

Thank you to every firm and individual that has contributed to this remarkable Report, as well as all those who submit to Chambers DEI Awards each year and continue to drive positive action in the legal profession and beyond. We hope that this Report will help support you in your DEI and pro bono work and look forward to continually collaborating with the legal profession through our research and events.

Global Chapter

Introduction



Ellie Gerszt
DEI Manager

The pace of the change in the legal industry over the last few years has been remarkable. Artificial Intelligence, rapidly shifting markets, the post-Covid workplace, ESG and more: the multitude of factors propelling the global legal industry through a period of rapid evolution and development cannot be understated.

Throughout this seismic shift, with the pace of change echoing that of the transformation in response to internet and technological advances, perhaps we might take some comfort from that oft-quoted line from Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr – “plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose”: the more things change, the more they stay the same.

While the world shifts around us, many of the patterns or challenges faced remain unchanged over time. Every year, the Chambers DEI team receive hundreds of award nominations, totalling many hundreds of thousands of words – nominations often discuss the most innovative work in DEI, Pro Bono and ESG from around the globe. However, despite the marked ingenuity shown in these responses we also consistently mark initiatives aiming to address challenges which the industry continues to grapple with year after year, decade after decade.

How do law firms provide an equitable experience for parents? What is the best way the uniquely placed legal industry can support the ever-growing numbers of refugees and asylum seekers? And how can DEI initiatives, implemented with the best will in the world, be properly governed, reported on and scrutinised?

The case studies in this section represent a glimpse into how innovative firms are addressing these questions. From Japan to Brazil, Italy to the USA – insights are offered into the programmes created, hurdles overcome and impact seen. Our first case study looking at the legal industry’s support for refugees focuses on pro bono assistance for refugees navigating the highly challenging Japanese refugee claim system. We also include a profile from Margaret Saselu at Fragomen, whose joint passions of running and access to justice converged through her support for Free to Run and assisting their Community Development Leaders in evacuating women from Afghanistan and relocating to the USA.

“...how can DEI initiatives, implemented with the best will in the world, be properly governed, reported on and scrutinised?”

Our case study from Anderson Mori & Tomotsune also provided an interesting insight into why working with refugees is such a mainstay of firms’ pro bono slate, noting the benefits from the inherent lack of potential conflicts between their core corporate practice and pro bono supporting refugees. This can also be coupled with a lack of expertise, a challenge eagerly met by the Italian Pro Bono Collaboration for Afghan Refugees, which provided intensive training for corporate lawyers participating in both the legal and human side of these cases.

We also profile firms who have made significant developments in parental leave offerings. Whether working in environments which exclude lawyers from existing legal frameworks (such as Japan) or those which require actively including LGBT+ parents, these firms are taking significant steps in ensuring employees have crucial time with their new child while also minimising the risk of employees leaving and taking their significant expertise

or client base with them. Firms in this section also make clear the consultative approach taken with employees who might be affected by policy changes, modelling the ‘Nothing About Us Without Us’ approach popularised by the Disability Rights Movement in the late 20th century.

Lastly, this section discusses firms providing services for external clients focused on DEI governance and compliance. One new trend coming out of the legal market in the last few years is that we are increasingly seeing law firms creating DEI-specific offerings to support clients. A combination of internal DEI expertise, Employment Law and a detailed understanding of the jurisdictional legislative frameworks which affect programmes such as Affirmative Action provides a bespoke service to clients who wish to invest in this critical area while navigating often challenging or complex legislative requirements. Whether assisting clients with compliance around gender equality certifications in Italy or the creation of a specific Anti-Discrimination Desk in Brazil, the combination of commitment to DEI and strong client service is laudable.

“As the world continues to change around us at a breathtaking pace and the challenges faced by the legal industry and their clients continue to evolve, we look forward to being inspired each year by the ingenuity of the profession in facing challenges new and old.”

Case study:

Support for Refugees

DENTONS, HOGAN LOVELLS, LINKLATERS AND ORRICK

“Asylum seekers are a vulnerable group who face numerous challenges, such as lack of financial means, language barriers, emotional and even physical trauma, separation from family and friends, as well as racism and discrimination.”

The resumption of power by the Taliban in Afghanistan in August 2021 led to a 600% increase in Afghan refugees seeking asylum in Italy (according to the Italian Interior Ministry). The Italian Coalition for Civil Liberties and Rights (CILD) received numerous requests from Afghans seeking legal assistance to be granted sanctuary in Italy - above all from categories of people at risk such as women and human rights activists.

Fabi Fugazza, Co-Executive Director of CILD, originated the project and reached out to Dentons, Hogan Lovells, Linklaters and Orrick to form the Italian Pro Bono Collaboration for Afghan Refugees (CIPBRA). They brought experience from other successful collaborative pro bono projects to help set up the CIPBRA in a smooth manner. Loredana Leo, an immigration lawyer, was hired as the CIPBRA's Legal Supervisor, and Vittoria Garosci now works alongside Loredana as a legal officer.

The CIPBRA provides pro bono legal advice and representation to Afghan asylum seekers and, where capacity allows, other asylum seekers in need seeking to access and settle in Italy and to reunify their families.

Asylum seekers are a vulnerable group who face numerous challenges, such as lack of financial means, language barriers, emotional and even physical trauma, separation from family and friends, as well as racism and discrimination.

From the lawyers' side, most of the pro bono volunteers are commercial lawyers who do not have direct experience in immigration and asylum matters. Given that the volunteers are not accustomed to working with refugees, they receive a manual and intensive training prior to joining the project. The manual covers the relevant legal information (refugee law, Italian immigration law, family reunification, human rights law), the

process to follow while working on the cases and when supervision is needed.

It also provides information about self-care, vicarious trauma and working with vulnerable individuals. The training highlights the main elements of the manual and allows participants to discuss case studies and ask questions. In addition, CIPBRA's legal supervisor provides guidance and support along the way.

Since the beginning of the project, more than 70 lawyers from the four law firms have participated in the CIPBRA, delivering more than 2500 hours of pro bono assistance and strategic litigation support to vulnerable individuals in urgent need of protection, family reunification and resettlement.

Through this work, they have helped more than 322 Afghan refugees and asylum-seekers, of which 45% were children. The team has responded to almost 500 legal assistance requests, including making referrals and assisting other organisations with their queries around humanitarian visas or family reunification.



Examples of some specific successes so far include:

- Obtaining important decisions in the Court of Rome confirming the right to family reunification in situations where families had remained separated, with some loved ones left in extremely perilous circumstances in Afghanistan.
- Assisting in a case regarding a family divided during their evacuation in Afghanistan. Two adults, who had been minors at the time of application, were granted visas due to their being minors at the time of the request, even though they would not have been eligible as adults. This was an important case to cement eligibility of applicants despite processing delays.
- Assisting two minor siblings in getting placed under the guardianship of their older sibling by the Afghan Islamic Court. This case was of huge importance as it is often difficult to secure family reunification visas for minor siblings.
- Obtaining a precautionary ruling in which the Court of Rome ordered the state police to issue permits for family reasons in favour of a young mother, who had already entered Italy and given birth to a baby daughter. This is a very important precedent as it's the first time an Italian court ordered another public authority to proceed with the issue of a permit to stay.

Support for Refugees

MARGARET SASELU, FRAGOMEN, DEL REY, BERNSEN & LOEWY LLP (USA)



Throughout my career, I've been dedicated to advancing justice for women and children, particularly in areas like

asylum claims and domestic violence. This drive ultimately aligned with my love for running, which I found to be a powerful means of building confidence and resilience.

When I discovered Free to Run (F2R), I was deeply moved by their mission to empower women in conflict zones through running. The organisation addresses the unique challenges that adolescent girls and young women face in these areas, helping them overcome societal limitations on physical activity. This connection sparked the idea of integrating my passion for running with my commitment to social justice.

To take this idea from concept to implementation, I actively engaged with F2R, participating in their programmes and advocating for their initiatives. I recognised the potential of running not just as a sport, but as a transformative

“By supporting young women through running, we can help them build physical strength and confidence, ultimately empowering them to become leaders in their communities.”

tool for fostering self-esteem, leadership and community development. By supporting young women through running, we can help them build physical strength and confidence, ultimately empowering them to become leaders in their communities. This holistic approach has fuelled my ongoing efforts to champion opportunities for women and girls to succeed, both in sports and in life.

I had been following F2R for several years and was consistently impressed by their impactful work with young women and girls. As a lifelong runner and an advocate for women in sports, I found their mission inspiring and was eager to get involved. When the US military evacuated Afghanistan, I kept up with the



organisation's updates and recognised a critical need for support – one that I felt I could help address.

The Taliban takeover in August 2021 posed a severe threat to F2R's work in Afghanistan. The Community Development Leaders (CDLs), who had been instrumental in improving the lives of Afghan women and girls, suddenly faced significant risks as the Taliban reinstated restrictive norms, including a ban on women in sports. This erosion of their rights was an unacceptable attack on their autonomy and mental health, compelling me to take action to safeguard their well-being.

“Our mission became clear: to bring these young women to safety in the US, protecting their rights and allowing them to continue championing gender equality in a more secure environment.”

Recognising the urgency of the situation, we prioritised evacuating the CDLs, despite the challenges involved. While our staff was successfully evacuated, the CDLs were left behind without formal employment status, exposing them to persecution due to their progressive work. Our mission became clear: to bring these young women to safety in the US, protecting their rights and allowing them to continue championing gender equality in a more secure environment.

The impact of this work with F2R has been international in scope as I focused on seeking Humanitarian Parole for young women and their families trapped in Afghanistan. F2R played a crucial role in relocating these women to Pakistan while we developed a legal strategy for their safe entry into the US. Assembling a team of eight attorneys, we prepared applications for six young women and their relatives – a groundbreaking effort that had never been attempted by an organisation in this context.

Despite the absence of a clear model for success, we crafted a compelling legal argument highlighting the vulnerability

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of these women as representatives of a progressive vision for Afghanistan. By emphasising their participation in sports and leadership – now prohibited by the Taliban – we showcased their urgent need for protection. Our efforts resulted in expedited humanitarian requests and advocacy with congressional leaders. The conditional approvals we received in December 2023 not only marked a significant step for these young women but also established a new model for future humanitarian applications, reinforcing our commitment to advancing justice and empowering women.

I’m most proud of advocating for the young women who embodied the mission of promoting gender equality in Afghanistan. Recognising them as vital allies, I felt it was unconscionable to leave them behind, and was able to successfully persuade the government to grant conditional approvals in December 2023, allowing these brave women to begin their journey to safety in the US and continue their important work for women’s rights.

Case study:

Support for Refugees

ANDERSON
MORI &
TOMOTSUNE

ANDERSON MORI & TOMOTSUNE (JAPAN)

Recently, there has been an increase in the number of newcomers to Japan who have been forced to flee their homes due to the war in Ukraine, the tragedy in Sudan, and other conflicts around the world. However, the number of those who have been granted refugee status in Japan is extremely small. There were 13,823 applications received by the Ministry of Justice in 2023, but the number of applicants granted refugee status in the same year is only 303 (3.8%). The refugee application process in Japan is very complicated and usually takes a long time (three years on average). Combined with the language barrier, there is a great need for assistance in the application process.

AMT has a long-standing cooperation with the Japan Association for Refugees (JAR). JAR is a nonprofit organisation that provides assistance to refugees in many ways, including helping refugees go through the application process and introducing lawyers to those who need proper legal assistance. We regularly receive referrals from JAR for such refugees who are in immediate need of legal assistance.

AMT also supports Pathways Japan, established in 2021, with the aim of opening new paths for refugees through education. Since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, Pathways Japan has been working with universities and language schools in Japan to host and support Ukrainian students. AMT provided legal support for its establishment and hosted the orientation for the Ukrainian students who just arrived in Japan.

Refugee application work does not conflict with AMT's core corporate law practice, and is therefore one of the pro-bono activities in which we can consistently engage. As an international and respected law firm in Japan, we are eager to offer our legal support to these organisations and individuals.

As mentioned above, the rate of granting refugee status in Japan is extremely low, and it takes years for even those refugees who clearly qualify to obtain refugee status in Japan. One of the reasons for this is the Japanese government's strict scrutiny of the requirements for refugee status. AMT makes full use of various research tools to gather information about their home countries and prepare convincing



application materials. We also provide careful support, from assisting refugees through the immigration interview process to helping them settle into life in Japan. The teamwork of AMT's dedicated attorneys and paralegals makes a significant contribution to these activities.

“We also provide careful support, from assisting refugees through the immigration interview process to helping them settle into life in Japan.”

“Thanks to our steady efforts, all of the refugees for whom AMT has provided support with their applications have been granted refugee status so far.”

Thanks to our steady efforts, all of the refugees for whom AMT has provided support with their applications have been granted refugee status so far (though some applicants' procedures are still pending). Considering the low rate of refugee recognition in Japan, we can say that this is a great achievement. We are constantly sharing these experiences at external seminars and through articles, and are thus helping to raise awareness of the situation surrounding refugees in Japan.

Enhanced Parental Leave Policies

CREEL, GARCIA-CUELLAR, AIZA Y ENRIQUEZ, S.C.

Our diversity and inclusion task force identified a gap in our parental leave policy which translated into an opportunity for change, as a crucial factor behind gender inequality and determined that closing it, by promoting shared parenting responsibility, creating programmes to adjust workloads before and after parental leave, and implementing flexible schedules, was essential to support gender equality and work-life balance for both primary and secondary caregivers.

While reviewing our policy, we also identified that local law in Mexico only recognises the binary concept of maternity and paternity leave, excluding the parental rights of our LGBTQ+ community. As a result, we updated our policy to include parenting and paid leave rights for all individuals, regardless

of their sexual orientation or gender identity, ensuring an inclusive policy for the LGBTQ+ community.

The Mexican legal framework establishes that men or secondary caregivers were entitled to only five business days of paid parental leave, while women or primary caregivers received 12 weeks of paid leave. This created a significant gender gap in terms of parental responsibilities and professional impact.

The changes we made to our policy include:

- Increased paid leave for secondary caregivers (men): We extended paid paternity or secondary caregiver paid leave from five to 15 business days to encourage shared parenting responsibility.
- Extended maternity leave: We increased paid maternity or primary caregiver leave from 12 to 14 weeks, beyond local law requirements.
- Inclusion of adoption leave: We introduced paid adoption leave, providing 45 days of paid leave for the primary caregiver and 15 days for the secondary caregiver.

“...we updated our policy to include parenting and paid leave rights for all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.”

- Recognition of LGBTQ+ parental rights: We revised our policy to ensure that LGBTQ+ employees have the same parental leave and rights as other employees, recognising diverse family structures.
- Leave for pregnancy terminations or miscarriages: We also introduced paid leave in the case of pregnancy terminations or miscarriages to provide support to our employees during difficult times.

One of the main challenges we faced was the disparity in the duration of parental leave between men and women, which stems from a culture that has historically assigned women the role of primary caregivers in families. This gap negatively impacts women's careers and is a key factor in gender inequality. Overcoming this disparity was a challenge. To address it, we implemented mechanisms and programmes to ensure that our male employees take their parental leave, promoting shared parenting responsibility and adopting positive forms of masculinity within the organisation.

Another significant challenge was adapting our policy to include the LGBTQ+ community. Local law only recognised parental leave in a binary manner, excluding the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals regarding parenting. As a result, we revised our policy to ensure that all employees, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, have the same parental rights. These

challenges were addressed through a comprehensive approach that included legal review, internal awareness, and the implementation of measures to promote gender equality and inclusion.

The changes we made have had a profound impact, ranging from internal processes and policies to cultural advances. We not only revised our parental leave policy in line with the best practices of the ILO and UN Women, but we also aimed to enhance the experience of our associates and collaborators throughout different stages of their personal lives.

To make the process as smooth and friendly as possible, we introduced a toolkit within our support system, helping to manage what are often hectic and stressful situations. By advancing in diversity, equity, and inclusion, we believe we have made a lasting impact on both gender equality and the inclusion of our LGBTQ+ community, creating not just an inclusive environment, but one where everyone feels a true and sustainable sense of belonging.

Through these efforts, we have fostered a culture of solidarity and confidence among our team, which in turn has increased creativity, collaboration and innovation.

We acknowledge there is still a path to be explored ahead of us to further our diversity, equity and inclusion efforts and look forward to doing so with our stakeholders.

Case study:

Enhanced Parental Leave Policies

MORI HAMADA & MATSUMOTO (JAPAN)

The idea to revamp our parental leave policies came from discussions about the need to support our growing firm's lawyers in balancing work and family life. As the firm expanded, we recognised the importance of establishing a proper system to facilitate childcare leave. We began by conducting a survey of all the lawyers to understand which age groups had the most children and what type of leave was needed. Based on the results, we developed a tailored childcare leave system that has met these needs.

In Japan, the Act on Childcare Leave, Caregiver Leave, and Other Measures for the Welfare of Workers Caring for Children or Other Family Members grants workers the right to take childcare or family care leave, with compensation provided through the public employment insurance system. However, lawyers are not covered by this law, meaning they were not legally entitled to take such leave. Recognising the need for a more supportive environment, we created our own childcare leave system for lawyers, using the existing legal framework as reference.

Our system allows all lawyers regardless of gender to take up to four weeks

of leave, with 100% of their basic compensation guaranteed until their child is one year old. Before this reform, childcare leave was available but rarely used due to it being unpaid, and no male lawyers had taken leave at all.

The first challenge was determining the actual need for childcare leave, as it was not initially clear how much demand existed. Additionally, since lawyers are not eligible for employment insurance benefits to cover paid leave, we had to fund the system entirely from the firm's resources.

To address these issues, we conducted a firm-wide survey to assess the need for paid childcare leave and to evaluate the financial implications of introducing it.

“There was a prevailing perception at the firm that “almost no one takes childcare leave”, so it was also necessary to shift this mindset to “taking childcare leave is natural and should be encouraged”.”

Based on the findings, we were able to successfully implement the system.

Furthermore, there was a prevailing perception at the firm that “almost no one takes childcare leave”, so it was also necessary to shift this mindset to “taking childcare leave is natural and should be encouraged”. To raise awareness, we held explanatory meetings internally and organised round-table discussions with male lawyers who had taken leave under the new system. This helped to promote the importance of using childcare leave and normalised the idea within the firm.

The impact has been substantial. Now, more than 80% of lawyers, particularly men, take childcare leave – a dramatic

“Now, more than 80% of lawyers, particularly men, take childcare leave – a dramatic shift from the previous situation where no male lawyers took leave.”

“Childcare leave is now seen as a natural part of the firm’s work environment, creating an atmosphere where taking leave is widely accepted.”

shift from the previous situation where no male lawyers took leave. A year after implementing the system, we conducted another survey of lawyers with children and received many positive responses, which confirmed that the changes were well received and effective.

The most significant achievement has been the cultural shift. Childcare leave is now seen as a natural part of the firm’s work environment, creating an atmosphere where taking leave is widely accepted. This shift is crucial for fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace. With this success, we are committed to further enhancing the system to make the firm an even better place to work for everyone.

Individual profile:

DEI Compliance



LUANA PEREIRA DA COSTA, PMR ADVOCACIA (BRAZIL)



The relationship between the business environment and anti-discrimination remains an underexplored

theme in Brazil. However, corporate discussions began to incorporate more significant concerns about diversity, inclusion, and equity, especially after the tragic incident involving George Floyd. Alternatively, the growing focus on ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) topics has intensified, particularly those linked to the Sustainable Development Goals and companies' commitment to the 2030 Agenda.

Despite the increased incoming of individuals from minority groups into business environments, representation remains disproportionately low. However, this does not mean that these spaces have automatically become safe and anti-discriminatory, whether in work relations, advertising, or client interactions. On the contrary, incidents of discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, and other markers

“...incidents of discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, and other markers have become increasingly public and widely reported.”

have become increasingly public and widely reported.

Brazil has several anti-discrimination laws applicable to both individuals and organisations. Since the 1988 Federal Constitution, racism, for instance, has been classified as non-bailable and has no statute of limitations period, including behaviours such as obstructing the hiring of Black individuals or refusing to serve Black customers.

In a recent ruling, the Supreme Court equated homophobia with racism, meaning discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity is also classified as a crime. Another recent example is Law No. 14,457/2022 which established the Employ + Women Program (Emprega + Mulheres Programa), which mandates



certain companies to provide anonymous reporting channels with a guarantee of non-retaliation for reports of workplace violence, discrimination, and harassment. These examples, along with the international laws Brazil is subject to, reflect a commitment to anti-discrimination measures.

In this context, the risks organisations face related to discrimination have become more critical, more likely, and with greater impact, encompassing reputational and financial risks as well. The need to prevent, mitigate and address these risks has grown within the corporate sphere, requiring technical skills beyond traditional approaches to Law and Compliance, demanding expertise in Anti-discrimination Law, Sociology, Management, Governance, Diversity and Inclusion, and ESG.

Responding to this need, PMR Advocacia launched the Anti-discrimination Desk in October 2021, the first anti-discrimination law division within a corporate law firm in Brazil. The Anti-discrimination Desk operates through three main pillars: anti-discrimination compliance; pro bono support for anti-discrimination projects; and knowledge production on the subject. We also engage in

the extrajudicial resolution of discrimination-related conflicts and contentious advocacy.

Anti-discrimination compliance strengthens ethical culture within companies, supports diversity, equity, and inclusion programmes, backs ESG strategies, and mitigates corporate, reputational, and financial risks beyond the legal ones. Considering our activities, we have provided numerous anti-discrimination compliance training sessions, especially for compliance, risk, and senior leadership teams. One of our foremost achievements has been developing an anti-discrimination protocol for all retail stores of one of Brazil's largest beauty companies. This protocol is designed to respond to situations of discrimination within stores, whether by employees or customers, protecting the involved parties and reducing associated risks.

In our pro bono support for anti-discrimination projects, we provide legal counsel to strengthen initiatives such as the Racial Equity Promotion Pact (Pacto de Promoção da Equidade Racial), a project aiming to implement a Racial ESG Protocol for Brazil, and the programme "From Silence to Silicon" (Do Silêncio ao

Silício) which brought ten young Black entrepreneurs for an immersion in Silicon Valley to increase racial representation in the innovation and technology landscape.

In knowledge production on this theme, in 2022, founding partner Fabiano Machado da Rosa and Desk leader Luana Pereira da Costa launched the book *Anti-discrimination Compliance: Practical Lessons for a New Corporate World* (Compliance Antidiscriminatório: Lições práticas para um novo mundo corporativo) through Thomson Reuters, considered one of the leading works on the subject in Brazil.

Currently, the book is being updated, with a new edition planned for release in May 2025. The anti-discrimination compliance approach is innovative in asserting that discrimination within corporate environments and in relations between companies and stakeholders constitutes a compliance issue. It should be addressed through risk mapping, leadership support, the development of specific policies, specialised investigations, and other typical compliance tools, intertwined with anti-discrimination law principles and concepts.

A key challenge lies in the resistance to understanding issues of direct and indirect discrimination as legal violations rather than merely behavioural conflicts. As a result, discrimination risks are often overlooked by compliance departments, leaving organisations without adequate

“A key challenge lies in the resistance to understanding issues of direct and indirect discrimination as legal violations rather than merely behavioural conflicts. As a result, discrimination risks are often overlooked by compliance departments, leaving organisations without adequate controls to prevent and mitigate these risks.”

controls to prevent and mitigate these risks. Another challenge concerns the polarisation around anti-discrimination issues, with initiatives that value diversity, inclusion, and equity being stigmatised. To overcome these obstacles, in addition to our knowledge production, we participate in corporate events and media interviews, aiming to raise awareness in the Brazilian corporate sphere about the importance of these issues and the significant risks involved.

For us, all organisations, public and private, must treat anti-discrimination as a strategic priority. Compliance areas should recognise discrimination risks, whether concerning internal or external audiences, as compliance risks that require effective controls for their prevention, mitigation and remediation.

Case study:

DEI Compliance



LCA STUDIO LEGALE (ITALY)

The idea of putting together a team specialising in diversity developed quite naturally from the acquaintance between three female lawyers who, in their professional and personal lives, have always strived to draw attention to women's rights and the forms of discrimination that still exist in modern society.

From activism and personal involvement in associations, we moved on to setting up a team with cross-disciplinary legal expertise that could advise organisations on how to concretely apply the principles of equal opportunities.

The shift from “will” to “practice” was made possible by the approval of the PNRR, which in Mission 5 provided for the establishment of a unified gender equality certification system, and by the entry into force of Law 162/2021, which defined the institution of gender equality certification.

From this starting point, in line with our involvement in professional associations such as ASLA, ASLA Women and UNI (Italian Standards Body), we decided to take part in the UNI Working Table on the Reference Practice that regulated

“It is only in recent years that the concept of governance of a law firm is becoming more widespread, with all the relevant consequences in terms of compliance.”

the KPIs of gender equality certification (PdR 125:2022) and once the practice was approved and the certification became effective, we decided to test it on ourselves and certified ourselves as the first law firm in Italy (still maintaining this primacy to this day).

This first experience allowed us to gain the right expertise to start a specialised consulting practice for organisations that want to comply with the requirements of PdR 125:2022 and ensure inclusive mechanisms in personnel management processes.

The main challenges we had to face concerned, internally, the difficulties in having to apply a certification system to a law firm which, by definition, is an association of several legal professionals

and which, in Italian practice at least, prefers a flexible, non-procedure-centred organisational structure. It is only in recent years that the concept of governance of a law firm is becoming more widespread, with all the relevant consequences in terms of compliance.

On the external side, we had to deal with the difficulties of having to apply a very recently introduced regulation, gaining experience on the field, and above all of having to clash with a business system that is still characterised by medium-sized and family-run companies, which, although sensitive to equal opportunities issues, were not yet adequately structured in terms of internal processes, analysis and monitoring of the measures put in place to foster inclusion and prevention of discrimination risks.

Over the past few years, we have supported dozens of organisations, both companies and public bodies as well as trade associations, to set up a system of internal procedures, policies and mechanisms that would foster compliance with the principles of non-discrimination and the legal provisions on equal opportunities in the workplace.

We have supported many realities in the creation of a gender equality management system that started from the fundamental assumption of enhancing the value of human resources within the organisation and that has resulted in more transparent internal communication mechanisms on career management, salary increases,

“...we had to deal with the difficulties of having to apply a very recently introduced regulation, gaining experience on the field, and above all of having to clash with a business system that is still characterised by medium-sized and family-run companies.”

promotions and professional growth, in structured training programmes on diversity issues and in the implementation of effective measures to ensure work-life balance and staff well-being.

All the organisations we supported and accompanied through to the final certification stage have successfully obtained gender equality certification under PdR UNI 125:2022.

Certainly, the results we are most proud of from our work on gender equality issues concern the changes that our professional and personal commitment has helped bring about both within our firm and in the organisations we have assisted as clients – changes that mainly concern the culture and the growth of awareness, at all levels, on the need to monitor and prevent the risks of discrimination, modifying and improving internal practices and adopting concrete measures of inclusion.

USA Chapter

Introduction



Kushraj Cheema
North America Research Director



James Haggerty
USA Research Director

In an ever-changing legal landscape, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) remains an important area of focus for both law firms and in-house counsel in the USA. Significant numbers of law firm clients, including multinational corporates, local companies and public sector entities continue to look closely at DEI, in all its forms, both within their own workforce and in their choice of external counsel.

In recent years, the focus of law firms' own DEI initiatives and pro bono work covered a broad range of subject matters designed to both widen access to the legal profession and widen access to justice among the broader public. In this report, we include three case studies on each of the following topics: pro bono work focused on voting rights; the emergence of work focusing on Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) justice and affinity; and innovative approaches to mentoring, a long-standing pillar of DEI efforts.

One notable theme found across all three case studies in this section of the Report indicates that firms are expanding the scope of their efforts to be responsible businesses, responding to the challenges of the day and fine-tuning their existing initiatives for greater results.

There is also increasingly clear evidence that in-house teams are paying significant attention to the DEI credentials of their outside counsel. In our research, clients regularly highlight that they factor diversity considerations as a core part of their selection of outside counsel, including when making panel appointments.

Responding to the needs of sophisticated law firm clientele, the Chambers USA research team continually reviews our processes to ensure our research enables clients to find the best possible talent from the entire spectrum of the legal market. We encourage firms to submit a wide variety of referees for each practice area, as hearing from a diverse range of voices helps to ensure that as many people and perspectives as possible contribute to our rankings.

“We also partner with organizations that champion, for example, women attorneys in certain practice areas, helping us to ensure our rankings are reflective of the make-up of the legal industry as it stands today.”

We also partner with organizations that champion, for example, women attorneys in certain practice areas, helping us to ensure our rankings are reflective of the make-up of the legal industry as it stands today. Indeed, it is our work to highlight the market as it exists that sees us also encourage firms to voluntarily report demographic information on the makeup of practice groups, allowing us to ensure our research output reflects the reality of how law firm practice groups look internally.

Our practice area research works in tandem with the DEI programme, which recognises DEI best practice through Awards and Reports. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with the legal profession, expanding and fine-tuning our DEI efforts, to identify the best talent, for when it matters.

Individual profile:

Voting Rights

WILLKIE

M. ANNIE HOUGHTON-LARSEN, WILLKIE FARR & GALLAGHER LLP



Ruby Freeman and Wandrea' (Shaye) Moss were election workers in Georgia during the 2020 election who

were falsely targeted by Rudy Giuliani and others and accused of "stealing" the Georgia election for President Biden. The team at Willkie, led by partners Mike Gottlieb and Meryl Governski, were connected with Ms Freeman and Ms Moss in late 2021 through Protect Democracy, a non-profit dedicated to defending democracy and elections. It has been a privilege to represent Ms Freeman and Ms Moss in their fight for truth and to hold Mr Giuliani accountable. Like so many others, I felt disillusioned by

"It was particularly important to me as an attorney, in whatever even small way, to try to begin repairing the damage that had been done."

the deluge of disinformation during and after the 2020 election and the growing distrust in the democratic process. It was particularly important to me as an attorney, in whatever even small way, to try to begin repairing the damage that had been done.

As attorneys, we know that the law can be an incredibly powerful force for good. But that powerful force cannot be unleashed without the commitment of attorneys and the institutional support of the firms they work for. As every litigator knows, the path to legal victory is not glamorous – that's true of the historic jury verdict of nearly \$150 million for Ms Freeman and Ms Moss. It took years of discovery, motions practice, and preparation to hold one powerful man accountable – and the fight continues as we work to enforce the judgment. I am hopeful that other attorneys and firms will see our historic win as proof that these cases are worth pursuing because Ms Freeman and Ms Moss are not alone as victims of political disinformation, nor is Mr Giuliani alone as a perpetrator.

The representation of Ms Freeman and Ms Moss has had a tremendous impact on me – professionally and personally.



As the lead associate, I spearheaded negotiations with Mr Giuliani’s attorney and was key in preparing the team’s successful motions to compel and for sanctions. I touched nearly every aspect of trial, including the opening and closing presentations, Ms Freeman’s and Ms Moss’s testimony, and preparing for the cross-examination of Mr Giuliani that never came to pass. And following the historic verdict, I appeared for a live interview on CNN.

But the personal impact of this work has been even more significant. Ms Freeman and Ms Moss are brave and they are true patriots. Ms Freeman and Ms Moss put their lives at risk as civil servants counting ballots during the height of the COVID pandemic. And when one of the most powerful American political figures targeted them, by name, day after day, inspiring violence and vitriol, Ms Freeman and Ms Moss did not cower and they

“Ms Freeman and Ms Moss asked for help to make things right, to show that no one – regardless of wealth, power or a platform to influence – is above the law, and to ensure that what happened to them never happens to anyone again.”

did not ask for pity. Ms Freeman and Ms Moss asked for help to make things right, to show that no one – regardless of wealth, power or a platform to influence – is above the law, and to ensure that what happened to them never happens to anyone again.

Individual profile:

Voting Rights



WILMER CUTLER PICKERING HALE AND DORR LLP

GEORGE P. VARGHESE, WILMERHALE



Georgia has a long history of discriminating against Black Georgians and undertaking efforts to dilute the electoral

influence of Black voters. Following the 2020 census, Georgia redrew its state legislative maps. Despite the fact that the Black voting population in Georgia had increased significantly over the past decade, while its white population has declined, the Georgia legislature did not draw any new majority-minority Black districts.

The effect of these newly drawn maps was to dilute the power of Black voters.

“The court’s ruling mandated the redrawing of the state’s legislative maps, which now better reflect the demographic shifts and provide Black Georgians with a fair opportunity to elect candidates of their choice.”

We got involved when the ACLU Voting Rights Project reached out to assist them in the litigation. I led a WilmerHale team that partnered with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the ACLU of Georgia, and other organisations to challenge these maps on behalf of Black organisations and individuals in Georgia. The case *Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity v Raffensperger* highlighted the ongoing issue of racially polarised voting and the need for fair representation.

We filed our lawsuit the same day that Governor Kemp signed the new maps into law, challenging them under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. One of the challenges we faced was the Supreme Court’s scepticism of the VRA, and its repeated efforts to curtail it. As the case proceeded, the Supreme Court granted certiorari in *Allen v Milligan*, which was a direct challenge to Section 2 of the VRA.

As our case proceeded, Judge Jones repeatedly inquired about how *Milligan* could affect the rulings in our case. We meticulously briefed and argued our positions, but ultimately, he decided to wait to see how the court would rule. In June 2023, while our preliminary injunction was pending, the Supreme

“One of the highlights of the trial was the emotionally powerful testimony of our plaintiffs, Black Georgia voters, who testified about how important their right to vote is, and how much it meant to them.”

Court issued its ruling, reaffirming its Section 2 VRA precedent which allowed the case to proceed.

The impact of this work has been significant in ensuring fair representation for Black voters in Georgia. The court’s ruling mandated the redrawing of the state’s legislative maps, which now better reflect the demographic shifts and provide Black Georgians with a fair opportunity to elect candidates of their choice. One of the highlights of the trial was the emotionally powerful testimony of our plaintiffs, Black Georgia voters, who testified about how important their right to vote is, and how much it meant to them. One of our expert witnesses testified about how much Black voters in Georgia had to overcome historically to have their vote be counted. I am so proud of the work we did that gave so many Georgian voters a voice to be heard.

On a national level, this case sets a precedent for other states facing similar issues of voter suppression and gerrymandering. It underscores the

importance of judicial intervention in upholding the principles of democracy and ensuring that all citizens, regardless of race, have an equal opportunity to participate in the electoral process. The success in Georgia serves as a beacon of hope and a model for advocacy groups across the country, demonstrating that persistent legal efforts can lead to meaningful change and greater electoral fairness nationwide.

Law firms play a critical role in protecting the cornerstones of democracy by actively engaging in pro bono work, advocating for civil rights, and supporting policies that promote equal access to justice. Law firms should foster a culture of public service, so lawyers (both young and old) understand that the practice of law is both a privilege and a responsibility. We must use our legal skills and education to fight for those who cannot fight for themselves and make our nation a more perfect union.



Case study:

Voting Rights

Dechert
LLP

DECHERT LLP

Over the past two decades, Dechert lawyers acting pro bono have fought to protect the rights of marginalised individuals in the United States to exercise one of their most basic freedoms – the right to vote.

Despite the protections offered by the Voting Rights Act of 1965, one of the country's most far-reaching civil rights laws, a large number of states have sought to restrict some voters' access to the polls by means of overly restrictive and discriminatory voting laws. Litigation to challenge those laws has become more urgent since 2013, when the US Supreme Court opened the way for individual states to enact voting measures.

Nineteen states have since restricted voter access to the polls by means of voter ID laws, voter-roll purges and barriers to early voting that have effectively disenfranchised millions of US citizens. The effects of these laws have fallen heaviest on the poor and marginalised.

Acting in partnership with civil rights groups such as the ACLU, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, and Demos, Dechert lawyers have sought

“Nineteen states have since restricted voter access to the polls by means of voter ID laws, voter-roll purges and barriers to early voting that have effectively disenfranchised millions of US citizens. The effects of these laws have fallen heaviest on the poor and marginalised.”

to overturn or reform these restrictive voting laws by legislative means.

“It is our collective responsibility to ensure that all eligible citizens can vote safely and securely,” says Dechert's Neil Steiner, who has successfully challenged discriminatory laws across several states. “Ensuring that every citizen's voice is heard and valued – regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status – lies at the heart of our democracy.”

Some lawsuits have sought to enforce the National Voter Registration Act, which requires states to distribute

“It is our collective responsibility to ensure that all eligible citizens can vote safely and securely.”

registration forms every time individuals fill out applications for public assistance such as Medicaid or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Other efforts have challenged restrictive voter identification laws or addressed the systematic deprivation of voting rights of large classes of registered voters.

Recent litigation has challenged discriminatory redistricting maps, which threaten to disenfranchise marginalised communities in several states and major cities. “Ensuring fair representation through unbiased redistricting is essential to preserving the fair representation our constitution protects,” said Dechert’s Angela Liu, who helped the firm organise and lead challenges in Arkansas, Georgia and Texas on behalf of state affiliates of the NAACP, League of Women Voters and Common Cause.

This year, Dechert successfully challenged a racially gerrymandered voting district map produced by Miami’s City Commission. The redrawn map sparked community outrage for slicing through neighbourhoods and separating racial groups into distinct districts. Dechert partnered with the ACLU of Florida to represent several community

organizations, including two NAACP chapters, and residents, in suing the City of Miami for impermissibly racially gerrymandering the map in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause.

The US District Court in Miami granted plaintiffs’ motion for a preliminary injunction in 2023. The case proceeded to a full trial in January 2024, when the Dechert and ACLU litigation team demonstrated that the City had intentionally gerrymandered to keep separate three Hispanic districts, one Black district and one “Anglo” district. In April 2024, the court declared all five of Miami’s city commission districts unconstitutionally racially gerrymandered, mandating the creation of a new map for future elections and encouraging the parties to agree on an appropriate map.

Under a settlement approved by the court in July, the City agreed to adopt the plaintiffs’ proposed map. Neighbourhoods that had been divided along racial lines will now remain intact, as residents had advocated. The

“Ensuring that every citizen’s voice is heard and valued – regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status – lies at the heart of our democracy.”



settlement also required the City to place a charter amendment on the November 2025 ballot for voter approval, which would ban gerrymandering favouring particular candidates and incumbents and create a Citizens' Redistricting Committee to draft and submit maps to the Commission in all future redistricting cycles – “paving the way for decades of fair elections,” said Steiner.

Dechert's success in Miami follows progress in other voting rights cases. This year the firm filed amicus briefs in two major US Supreme Court cases; filed amicus briefs in federal court in Mississippi and the US Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit to protect the right to vote by mail; and won a decision in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court that voters whose mail-in ballots are rejected as defective can go to their polling places and cast provisional ballots to replace them, rather than losing their vote entirely.

This year Dechert also mobilised 642 firm personnel who donated 17,000 hours to provide urgent support to poll workers and voters on Election Day via a hotline run by Election Protection, a national, nonpartisan coalition.

By supporting organisations such as Election Protection, all those in the legal profession – and, indeed, even ordinary citizens – can play a vital part by helping voters from home or in person, or by tracking online disinformation. “Simply staying vigilant against attempts to undermine the electoral process can help preserve the integrity of our democracy,” says Liu. “That’s the best way to ensure that every voice is heard.”

Individual profile:

AAPI Justice and Affinity



JENNIFER WU, GROOMBRIDGE, WU, BAUGHMAN & STONE LLP



As the child of Taiwanese immigrants, I saw firsthand how difficult it was for my parents to trust the institutions that

are supposed to protect us. For example, my parents did not open the front door when the doorbell rang, whether it was law enforcement, the neighbours, or the postal service, and they did not report their experiences when they faced discrimination or prejudice. I became a lawyer in part to give voice to those who do not feel empowered to use their own. When anti-Asian violence surged in the

“I became a lawyer in part to give voice to those who do not feel empowered to use their own. When anti-Asian violence surged in the pandemic, I felt a responsibility to speak up and help.”

pandemic, I felt a responsibility to speak up and help.

Asian Americans exist in between races in America. We are both the model minority whose successes do not fit into conventional beliefs regarding victimhood and also the perpetual foreigners who are blamed in times of stress, as with the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. There is no playbook for victims of anti-Asian violence, and nor can there be, given that justice means different things to different people. For many victims of anti-Asian violence, their desire was to remain silent so that they could rebuild their lives in privacy.

That goal was in tension with what the Asian American community wanted, which was to publicise the attack and press for hate crime prosecution given that the crime against the individual was also an attack on the community. We faced challenges in providing wraparound services: how to build relationships with the prosecutors, the police, the elected officials, the media, and the community while at the same time respecting what the victims wanted. And we addressed these issues by putting our clients’ needs first, which is

“...we addressed these issues by putting our clients’ needs first, which is not something the criminal justice system is designed to do.”

not something the criminal justice system is designed to do.

We have represented, pro bono, nearly everyone who died of anti-Asian violence in the pandemic in New York City. We also co-authored two reports with the Asian American Bar Association of New York on anti-Asian violence. The importance of reporting on and bearing witness to the endless tide of anti-Asian hate cannot be overstated. For example, when I testified before the US Commission on Civil Rights in March 2023 regarding the federal government’s response to anti-Asian racism in the United States, some of the commissioners questioned whether there had been an actual surge in anti-Asian violence during the pandemic. Ignoring anti-Asian hate or minimising its impact on the Asian American community only increases the suffering of Asian Americans who do not feel seen. And it is only by speaking out that the violence will be addressed both now and for future generations.

Representing people who have died is not an achievement that I ever wished to have. But it is the work that I needed to do during the pandemic, both for myself and the Asian American community. We have helped our pro bono clients

achieve a measure of justice, whether by holding a press conference calling for an arrest (that then resulted in an arrest one day later) or working with victims and prosecutors to obtain hate crime convictions (for which we spoke at the sentencing hearings). Beyond any individual achievement, however, I am proudest of having encouraged lawyers and others in the justice system to think differently about public service and pro bono advocacy, and what it means to serve others and build community.



Individual profile:

Morgan Lewis

AAPI Justice and Affinity

MICHELLE PARK CHIU, MORGAN, LEWIS & BOCKIUS LLP



Creating tangible, concrete programmes to support Asian Americans lawyers is deeply meaningful

to me. As a child of immigrants, I know first-hand the value of having mentors to help you navigate the challenges of building a legal career, especially in a profession where it can be difficult to find role models who share similar life experiences. I was and continue to be the beneficiary of many mentors who helped me better understand how to develop a successful and fulfilling career, many of whom shared my Asian American heritage. I hope to honour their legacy by passing on the lessons I learned from them to new generations of Asian American lawyers.

After I made partner at my firm, I wanted to create a programme that provided opportunities for younger generations of Asian American lawyers to receive the kind of mentorship I received, especially because the data shows that it is still difficult for Asian Americans to become

“As a child of immigrants, I know first-hand the value of having mentors to help you navigate the challenges of building a legal career, especially in a profession where it can be difficult to find role models who share similar life experiences.”

partners at law firms. I developed “Pathways to Partnership” for the Asian American Bar Association of the Greater Bay Area (“AABA”) to do just that. The Pathways programme provides mentor families who serve as personal “boards of directors” for each senior associate in the programme, helping them prepare their business plans and develop concrete strategies to achieve their goal of making partner. Many of our mentors are “big law” partners and senior in-house lawyers, including chief legal officers and general counsels.

One challenge we faced was ensuring Pathways would provide relevant advice to the participating senior associates,

regardless of their practice area or specific firm, as I knew not all our mentors would have the same practice experience as the senior associates. To address this, I designed the programme to focus on business development and developing a personal brand, skills relevant to all law firm partners. I also knew that not all Asian American attorneys recognise how important these skills are to professional development. By focusing Pathways on these topics, we created opportunities for mentors to provide tangible advice to participating senior associates that were directly applicable to their own developing careers. Established in 2019, Pathways has become a core (and popular!) AABA programme. In fact, in the five years Pathways has operated, almost half of our participants have achieved their goal of becoming a law firm partner.

During my tenure as President of AABA in 2021, the Asian American community experienced a sharp increase in anti-Asian violence in the Bay Area and beyond during the COVID-19 pandemic. I knew our membership and community

were frightened, and many wanted to help but weren't sure how they could or were afraid to do so. I asked the AABA Board to identify concrete, practical ideas to support our community and allow our members to get involved in combating anti-Asian hate.

I firmly believe the best way to make a positive difference when facing any challenge is to take an active role – actions truly speak louder than words in these moments. While any one of us may not be able to “solve” a problem like anti-Asian hate, every one of us can make a contribution for good, whether it's donating to community organisations, showing up for a community service event, or taking on a pro bono matter. Our AABA LGBTQ+ and Civil Rights Committees stepped up immediately to compile a list of tangible ways to get involved and make a difference, culminating in the AAPI Anti-Hate Resource Guide.

Additionally, I am incredibly proud that during my year as AABA President we provided specific and concrete

“...we created opportunities for mentors to provide tangible advice to participating senior associates that were directly applicable to their own developing careers.”

“...in the five years Pathways has operated, almost half of our participants have achieved their goal of becoming a law firm partner.”



programming on how to combat anti-Asian hate, such as Bystander Intervention Training, a Know Your Rights event, and a CLE discussing Hate Crimes Prosecution. I was gratified that I was able to introduce similar types of programmes to my Morgan Lewis community. For example, as part of a series of conversations about allyship sponsored by the firm, we hosted an extremely well-attended “Asian American Identities” webinar that I led.

The webinar featured Asian American leaders at our firm who shared their personal experiences as Asian Americans and gave advice on how to be supportive allies. After the panel, I was moved by how many of my colleagues reached out to thank me for the enlightening conversation and committing to be better allies to our community, as well as the many Asian American attorneys who expressed their

“...every one of us can make a contribution for good, whether it’s donating to community organisations, showing up for a community service event, or taking on a pro bono matter.”

gratitude to us for giving voice to their lived experiences.

While no one person or programme will ever “solve” life’s great challenges, just think about how much progress we will make if each of us takes just one small step to make things better. I hope the programmes I created will inspire others to join the conversation in supporting a more diverse and inclusive profession, and I am excited to see what we can accomplish together.

Individual profile:

COVINGTON

AAPI Justice and Affinity

NEEMA SAHNI, COVINGTON & BURLING LLP



Covington's API@Cov Resource Group empowers Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) professionals to succeed

in the legal profession and beyond, while increasing awareness of the community's contributions at the firm. The group focuses on building connections and community, enhancing career progression for its members, and helping to advance DEI at the firm and with clients. I have served as a co-lead for API@Cov since 2020, contributing to the development and execution of the group's mission, focus areas, and strategic initiatives.

API@Cov has grown into one of Covington's largest Firm Resource Groups as we continue to develop new initiatives to support our community and address our members' needs. One such initiative is the South Asian Lawyer Mentoring Program, which I developed based on feedback from our South Asian associates about a lack of mentorship opportunities for South Asian lawyers.

This programme pairs associates of South Asian descent with senior lawyer mentors, who offer guidance on professional development and career strategies during monthly sessions.

One programmatic challenge I faced when establishing this programme was figuring out an effective method to allow colleagues to self-identify as part of Covington's South Asian community; it was important to the group that we not single out lawyers who may not identify with that community, and just as critically, not omit lawyers who, for example, might not present as South Asian. To solicit interest in the mentoring programme in a low-pressure way, I thus hosted a South Asian Lawyers Meet-Up at a pre-existing event and leveraged the attendance sheet to create an initial distribution list of South Asian lawyers at the firm.

Following the meet-up, I created a survey in partnership with Covington's DEI team and reached out to attendees to capture feedback and input on programme components that would be most beneficial. As a next step, I solicited senior lawyers' interest in serving as mentors and again partnered with the DEI team to develop a survey that could

be used to match the mentors with programme participants.

Since its launch, I am proud to have seen the programme's many benefits. For instance, one of the associates in the programme shared that, even though her mentor is in a different practice group, she feels comfortable connecting with him about how work intersects with her personal life, culture, and familial expectations. She appreciates that due to their shared background, she feels comfortable and empowered to share certain parts of her experience without needing to provide additional context.

Further, the programme has connected one of our associates abroad with a partner in our DC office, giving the associate a critical connection point to a mentor and resource in the firm's main office. As a result of these impacts, the programme has also inspired many more South Asian lawyers to self-identify, leading to more robust discussions about community needs, and connections among colleagues. Additionally, the South Asian Lawyer Mentoring Program has inspired the creation of similar mentorship programmes across Covington's other Firm Resource Groups.

I am also proud of the initiatives I have put in place to help API@Cov advance firm-wide education and awareness of the AAPI community's achievements, challenges, and contributions to the legal profession. To support this aspect of the group's mission, I regularly invite prominent speakers from the community to participate in events, often in celebration of heritage month

“...these initiatives have helped contribute to a culture where our colleagues can bring their unique identities and backgrounds into the workplace and feel comfortable sharing aspects of the communities they represent with peers.”

observances. Colleagues from across the firm participate in these events and expand their DEI fluency, while learning more about the many cultures and heritages represented within the firm.

Further, for cultural observances such as Diwali, I organise opportunities such as cultural dance workshops and photo slideshows to provide colleagues with a forum to share how they honour their traditions and celebrate with their families. I'm proud that these initiatives have helped contribute to a culture where our colleagues can bring their unique identities and backgrounds into the workplace and feel comfortable sharing aspects of the communities they represent with peers.

I look forward to continuing to increase the API@Cov Resource Group's membership numbers and initiatives moving forward, with the ultimate goal of helping the firm advance its mission to foster an inclusive workplace where everyone feels that they belong.

Individual profile:

Selendy|Gay

Next Level Mentoring

LAUREN ZIMMERMAN, SELENDY GAY



The idea to launch The Social Club, a social and professional networking group, was a very organic

one. My passion for supporting DEI in my profession is really an extension of my innate enjoyment of bringing people together and building community.

Through informal conversations I had at events and interactions I took part in as a member of Out Leadership and the Human Rights Campaign, I found that queer female and gender diverse

“I found that queer female and gender diverse individuals living and working in New York City felt there was a lack of meaningful ways to meet, connect and support one another in all facets of their lives.”

individuals living and working in New York City felt there was a lack of meaningful ways to meet, connect and support one another in all facets of their lives – from career goals, to parenting, to shared interests, such as sports and cooking. And to the extent one-off professional networking events existed, they were almost always limited to a singular profession, rarely having industry crossover.

When discussing this opportunity gap with three friends, we came up with the idea to start a social and professional networking group called “The Social Club” which would give LGBTQ+ women and other gender diverse people in New York City the opportunity to come together on a monthly basis to build community as well as develop and pursue their personal and professional goals and interests. In just over a year, we have developed a 200+ member list and have hosted a variety of robustly attended events, with our participation rate growing each month. The Social Club has become the thing our members look forward to each month, the people they turn to in both happy and challenging times, and an institution I sincerely hope



will continue to grow and strengthen each year.

When trying to coordinate any gathering, specifically in New York City, there are always obstacles like competing events, work obligations, and other commitments standing in the way. Deciding where to meet also posed some challenges, as we found that members were most interested in intimate spaces not open to the general public, which are quite limited, especially for a founding group. Thankfully, we quickly learned that our members were not only willing and excited to set aside time for our events each month but were also actively seeking and inviting additional members through our invite-only process.

Together with our members, we were able to creatively identify spaces for our events, and in several instances, members opened their homes and businesses or invested resources for our gatherings – all of which contributed to the rapid growth of the group and made our members feel personally invested in its success.

The Social Club has become a source of joy, support, and community in the lives of hundreds of queer women and gender diverse individuals in and outside New York City. As an invite-only club, each month our members have introduced new people to our organisation, helping

it to grow exponentially and even geographically, with people from other cities asking if they can start sister organisations in their areas. Even though we hail from different professions, family structures and backgrounds, our social, personal, and intellectual commonalities turn these gatherings into a wonderful blend of camaraderie, networking, and knowledge sharing.

Through The Social Club, members have found business partners and romantic partners, have engaged legal and financial advisors, and together enjoyed a myriad of experiences, from sporting events to group travel, to monthly poker games. In addition, The Social Club has become a place in which we can advocate for the inclusion and advancement of LGBTQ+ people at all levels of business and champion for those around us, including through hosting fundraisers and collectively supporting LGBTQ+ organisations and programming.

I think the best achievements are seen in what happens outside of the group. The Club is meant to be a place where ideas can be shared openly and inspiration can be found. We encourage each other to bring this inspiration back to our respective companies, organisations and boards to be needed catalysts for change – and we are there to support each other every step of the way.

Next Level Mentoring

TYRA PEARSON, MCGUIREWOODS LLP



The idea for Young Black Lawyers of Charlotte (YBLC) came from my experiences as a first-generation lawyer. After

starting at McGuireWoods in September 2019, I found it challenging to navigate the legal profession during the pandemic. Networking and building connections became crucial for me, and when I spoke with other Black attorneys, they shared similar feelings of isolation.

In late 2022, a law school colleague and I decided to take action. We discussed creating a safe space where young Black attorneys in the area could network and build relationships in a meaningful way. By early 2023, we had launched YBLC.

It was important for me to keep the organisation localised to create an intimate space where meaningful connections, rather than superficial relationships, could be built. Focusing on Charlotte allows the members to form a strong community and support each other in a way that would be more difficult on a larger scale. While there is

potential for growth, for now the goal is to maintain a local focus.

Additionally, since we are busy, practising lawyers, it made sense to start small. Charlotte is a great city for legal professionals, and this organisation helps promote the local legal community and attract others to the city.

One of the main challenges I faced was financial, as YBLC is a non-profit organisation and raising funds has become more difficult. I've been able to secure some financial support from law firms and other companies, though the contributions have not been consistent. I contributed from my own pocket to keep things running, especially in the beginning. As a result, YBLC is somewhat limited in the types of events it can host. Another significant challenge is balancing my legal career with leading the non-profit campaign, as it requires a lot of time and energy.

To overcome these challenges, we refined YBLC's mission and sharpened its messaging to clearly communicate the organization's value. Persuading members and potential supporters/donors that the organisation is needed

“...we have created a safe space where people can come together, be vulnerable and openly discuss these challenges. It’s cathartic, and it provides support that helps us navigate the daily pressures.”

in the community – and showing them how they could benefit – is key. Getting consistent engagement from attorneys also has been a challenge, given how busy they are, but I continue to work through these obstacles.

The impact has been tremendous, even though YBLC is still a young organisation. We held speaking engagements at law schools and universities, hosted continuing legal education events and launched a mentorship programme for law students and college students throughout North Carolina, providing valuable guidance and support.

In addition, we organised summer linkups, matching attorneys in Charlotte based on shared interests and location. At the end of the summer, we hosted a gathering for participants. Seeing people enjoy themselves and build relationships made it clear that our efforts were worth it.

Last winter, we also co-hosted a holiday party for over 100 attendees, and we held impactful events such as an annual Black History Month celebration and a Juneteenth event, partnering with other Black professional organisations in Charlotte. These moments of community and connection were truly rewarding.

What I’m most proud of is building an organisation that addresses a critical need from scratch. Being a Black professional in a predominantly white industry can be challenging. Impostor syndrome is something I deal with daily, even as I advance in my career. There’s a lot of pressure to succeed and represent my community well, which sometimes can be overwhelming.

With this initiative, we have created a safe space where people can come together, be vulnerable and openly discuss these challenges. It’s cathartic, and it provides support that helps us navigate the daily pressures. I’m proud that we’ve created an environment for Black attorneys in Charlotte where we can share our experiences and lift each other up.

Case study:

Next Level Mentoring



BAKER MCKENZIE

At Baker McKenzie we have three mentoring and sponsorship programmes running simultaneously, each with a different focus.

Leaders Investing for Tomorrow (LIFT) is the firm's 12-month sponsorship programme for women partners. LIFT was established to create a proactive and intentional approach to diversifying the firm's leadership pipeline. More than 50% of our associates are women, yet this was not reflected within the partnership. In order to build this pipeline, we enlisted highly successful partners to be sponsors for our high-potential women partners so they can excel and increase their visibility and progress to senior roles in the firm.

bConnected is a nine-month, comprehensive programme pairing our mid-level associates of colour with senior partners within North America. The goal of bConnected is to enhance the retention, promotion and development of this cohort, while continuing to build and embed a culture of inclusion and belonging. Participating associates will be provided with the opportunity to significantly enhance their interactions with key firm stakeholders, partner

“LIFT was established to create a proactive and intentional approach to diversifying the firm's leadership pipeline.”

participants, clients and business professionals. We have successfully run two cohorts and are preparing for our third cohort in early 2025.

RISE is a sponsorship programme for mid-to senior-level associates who are a few years away from promotion to partner. RISE enlists highly successful partners as sponsors to help the participants in continuing to build their network at the firm, aiding their journey toward promotion. This is a global programme, and we have successfully completed seven cohorts. We are now preparing to launch our eighth cohort in 2025.

At Baker McKenzie, our strength lies in our people and culture to best serve our clients. ID&E is integral to the strategy of the firm in developing our people. We have advanced many high-impact, meaningful development initiatives to integrate ID&E throughout the Firm,



including building a culture of mentorship and sponsorship so that our attorneys succeed and become future leaders. Through these initiatives, our lawyers work to develop practical knowledge and skills while establishing a rich network of relationships across our global network.

The global reach and size of our firm presents unique opportunities and challenges. We always work to establish programmes that will be effective across cultures and jurisdictions. The success of our LIFT programme is evidence of our ability to successfully leverage the size and scope of our firm for the benefit of our people.

We are also working to continue to recruit, retain and promote lawyers from historically underrepresented

“To date, over 80% of LIFT participants have moved into leadership roles during or after the programme.”

backgrounds by being intentional in each phase of their careers at the firm. We do this by working strategically with their practice groups, people functions and firm leadership.

RISE: To date, over 175 rising women lawyers gained enhanced visibility and career guidance through the programme, which expanded from EMEA to Asia Pacific and the Americas.

LIFT: To date, over 80% of LIFT participants have moved into leadership roles during or after the programme.

bConnected: Over 60 mid-level associates of colour have been paired with senior partner advocates.

We are most proud of the overall success of these programmes and their ability to further our culture of inclusion and success. All participants have flourished through their experiences in these programmes and provided positive feedback and successfully advanced in their careers.

Latin America Chapter

Introduction



Mónica Tantaleán

Latin America Research Director

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) remains a fundamental area of focus for both law firms and in-house counsel across Latin America. Throughout our research for the Latin America guide, we have observed that companies are looking more closely than ever at DEI, in all its forms, both within their own workforce and with their external providers.

In recent years the focus of law firms' DEI and pro bono initiatives has expanded, as shown by the sections in this chapter of the Report. The case studies in this chapter cover a growing commitment to pro bono work across the region, with firms building more structured pro bono practices that tackle a greater range of cases.

The Argentina Pro Bono Work Commission demonstrates a remarkable willingness for firms and individual lawyers to work together and share expertise to create a programme with an outsized impact in the legal services provided to those who need it most. Similarly, Lina Moya Ortiz's work at Gómez-Pinzón in Colombia shows what can be achieved through effective structuring, while the work of Ciro Colombara of Colombara Estrategia Legal in Chile is a prime example of firms taking on novel cases that ask fundamental questions about indigenous rights.

“...we see increasing attention on advancing social mobility in recruitment, retention and promotion, which was an aspect of DEI previously not commonly recognised in Latin America.”

In the Focus on Social Mobility section, we see increasing attention on advancing social mobility in recruitment, retention and promotion, which was an aspect of DEI previously not commonly recognised in Latin America. Mariana Herrero of Galicia Abogados in Mexico and Sebastián Ramos of FERRERE in Uruguay both collaborate with a variety of organisations, as well as instituting programmes within their firms, to tackle this crucial issue.

There is also increasingly clear evidence that in-house teams are paying more attention to the DEI credentials of their outside counsel. In our research, key clients in the market highlight that they factor diversity considerations as a core part of their selection of outside counsel, including when making panel appointments. In-house counsel will often single out the presence of a diverse team, which provides a meaningful contribution to their files, as something they value highly in the teams they work with.

“Our most recent data indicates that, since 2019, the percentage of women ranked in the Latin America guide has increased to around 25%.”

While this expanded focus is welcome and indeed essential, there remain significant challenges to be overcome both within the legal industry and in wider society. At Chambers, we aim to play our part in this work by ensuring we reflect the full diversity of the profession and ensuring our research is inclusive.

We are actively seeking to increase the proportion of lawyers from underrepresented backgrounds we speak to year-on-year. We also conduct regular training sessions with our research analysts to train the team to look for potential bias in the feedback they gather.

Our most recent data indicates that, since 2019, the percentage of women ranked in the Latin America guide has increased to around 25%, with all Central America countries on over 28%, and Dominican Republic, Nicaragua and El Salvador on over 40%. In terms of our five biggest jurisdictions (Mexico, Chile, Peru, Colombia and Argentina), Peru and Colombia enjoy the highest percentage, 32% and 34%, respectively. While we are delighted to report this increase, we know there remains much work to be done. We look forward to collaborating with Latin American law firms and lawyers in this endeavour.

Case study:

Pro Bono Development



ARGENTINA PRO BONO WORK COMMISSION

During the profound economic, social, political and institutional crisis that impacted Argentina between 2000 and 2001, several prominent law firms began offering free legal assistance in cases of public interest. These efforts supported non-profit social organisations and individuals from vulnerable communities. Against this backdrop, in 2001 a group of lawyers from the Bar Association of the City of Buenos Aires spearheaded the establishment of the Pro Bono Commission (the “Commission”), aiming to formalise and structure pro bono legal work.

The Commission was established to create a formal framework for connecting cases in need of legal advice with specialised law firms willing to provide support. This structure enabled firms to collaborate on complex cases, delivering more comprehensive and tailored assistance to the individuals and organisations they served. Since its inception, the Commission has emerged as the leading force behind pro bono work in Argentina, fostering social responsibility among lawyers and enhancing access to justice across the country.

Since its inception, the Commission has focused on:

1. Promoting pro bono practice: Encouraging law firms and individual lawyers to embrace pro bono work as a fundamental professional responsibility.
2. Generating social impact: Addressing legal issues that affect vulnerable communities and civil society organisations.
3. Establishing ethical and quality standards: Ensuring that pro bono services are delivered with the same level of excellence and professionalism as commercial legal work.
4. Creating a collaborative network: Fostering cooperation among lawyers, NGOs, public entities, and other key stakeholders.

“This spirit of cooperation has been instrumental in the growth and success of pro bono work in Argentina.”

“The Commission was established to create a formal framework for connecting cases in need of legal advice with specialised law firms willing to provide support.”

While all these objectives have been greatly surpassed by the solid pro bono culture established in the country, many legal needs and challenges remain unmet. In this regard, it is crucial to continue extending invitations to:

- A. those who have not yet engaged in voluntary, free legal work for society’s most disadvantaged sectors, encouraging them to do so, as the profound sense of hope and fulfilment that comes from transforming a life is unparalleled;
- B. those who, like many, currently work in isolation, urging them to join the Commission, as collaborative efforts amplify impact and enable legal and social issues to be addressed more comprehensively and sustainably.

Collaboration among law firms has been a cornerstone of the Pro Bono Commission’s success. Since its inception, the Commission has built a diverse network of law firms, corporate legal departments, and individual attorneys, all working voluntarily and in coordination to provide free legal assistance to individuals and non-profit organisations. This synergy has enabled the delivery of comprehensive legal support to those who need it most, amplifying the impact of pro bono efforts.

Currently, the Commission collaborates with over 32 law firms and corporate legal departments, working together to tackle cases of public interest. This partnership has streamlined case distribution, enabling a more agile and organised response to the legal needs of vulnerable communities. Moreover, the diverse legal expertise of the participating lawyers ensures a multidisciplinary approach, allowing for more effective solutions to the complex legal challenges faced by social organisations and individuals in vulnerable situations.

Pro bono work stands out as a collaborative effort among law firms, all driven by a shared goal: ensuring access to justice for the most disadvantaged sectors. What sets this collaboration apart is its philosophy of “non-competition,” a stark contrast to the competitive nature of securing billable clients. In practice, lawyers readily collaborate, sharing legal opinions, template documents, and strategies to streamline legal processes. This spirit of cooperation has been instrumental in the growth and success of pro bono work in Argentina.

It is worth noting that in 2016, in response to the significant increase in pro bono

work beyond the City of Buenos Aires, the Commission established the Pro Bono Federal Network. This network currently provides free legal assistance on public interest matters to more than 1,500 NGOs across the country and actively collaborates with communities in Argentina's provinces.

At the regional level, the Commission and the Federal Pro Bono Network are integral members of the Pro Bono Network of the Americas, a regional alliance formed through the joint efforts of several pro bono organisations with shared roots, goals and objectives in advancing pro bono legal work. Additionally, through the Commission, several law firms in Argentina have participated in international comparative law projects, collaborating with global law firms and corporate legal departments. These initiatives, often spearheaded by organisations such as The Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice, Pro Bono Network of the Américas, PILnet and TrustLaw, highlight Argentina's active role in fostering international legal cooperation.

None of this would have been possible without the collaborative spirit that all members embrace and understand. Competitors on one hand, and allies on the other – because the only way to grow and confront inequality is by uniting and working together. These unwritten rules of the Commission are deeply understood by all involved. To foster teamwork, many cases are handled by teams composed

of different firms, always with successful outcomes. Indirectly, this collaboration has often opened doors for working in other arenas, even in the competitive legal space.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the firms and companies participating in the commission are also locally and regionally recognised for their efforts and successful advice in pro bono matters to individuals, NGOs, civil society organisations, among others.

Some of the Commission's key statistics:

- Numbers of firms and corporate legal departments: over 32.
- Total number of attorneys involved in pro bono work: Currently, over 3,000 attorneys from law firms, corporations and other organisations.
- Number of pro bono hours per year: In 2023, over 72,000 hours were informally reported.
- Provinces/cities supported by the Network: since the launch of the Federal Pro Bono Network in 2016, the participation of all 23 provinces has been achieved.
- Number of universities in the Pro Bono Universities Network: 16 universities have signed agreements, and they are spread across the country.

Individual profile:

Pro Bono Development



CIRO COLOMBARA, COLOMBARA ESTRATEGIA LEGAL (CHILE)

“The work with the Rapa Nui people focuses on defending their right to manage their lands and indigenous territories and obtaining recognition from the Chilean state as the legitimate historical owners of the area.”



Ciro Colombara, founding partner of the Chilean law firm Colombara Estrategia Legal, is a lawyer recognised for

his leadership in complex legal cases in the areas of diversity, inclusion and human rights at both national and international levels. He leads the pro bono case entitled “Protection of the Rights of Indigenous Communities, Rapa Nui Ethnic Group”.

Since 2014, the Human Rights and Public Law team at the law firm has been leading complex strategic litigation in human rights at both national and international levels for the Rapa Nui people. This work is framed within a permanent relationship with Mr Alberto

Hotus, President of the Rapa Nui Elder Council and the highest ancestral authority of the Rapa Nui Indigenous People, aimed at ensuring respect, inclusion and preservation of this community’s culture.

In collaboration with the Rapa Nui indigenous community, the law firm defined legal work lines aimed at raising awareness and visibility regarding the cultural threats facing the Rapa Nui people from companies, the Chilean state, and other countries. These actions include:

1. a complaint before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on behalf of the Rapa Nui people regarding territorial rights over the island;
2. a request for the repatriation of the Moai Hoa Hakananai and Havaqu from the British Museum;



3. protection against the impact of climate change on the cultural heritage of the Rapa Nui people;
4. safeguarding against violations of Rapa Nui rights in the metaverse.

A significant milestone is the complaint on behalf of the Rapa Nui people against the Chilean state regarding property and territorial rights over the island, presented to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in 2015, which is still under review by the relevant legal entities. This has been a major challenge due to the number of actors involved: Rapa Nui residents, ancestral authorities, as well as municipal and state representation on the island. It has been ensured that discussions with all parties involved are constructive, allowing for unique agreements in legal decisions that have not been replicated by other law firms or state agencies.

The work with the Rapa Nui people focuses on defending their right to manage their lands and indigenous territories and obtaining recognition from the Chilean state as the legitimate historical owners of the area. It also emphasises the protection of the cultural heritage of the Rapa Nui people and the recovery of two Moai currently located in British territory. This recovery strategy is evidenced by meetings with the UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights to bring visibility to the case. Additionally, a letter to the King of England opens dialogue for the conservation and repatriation of the Moai located in the United Kingdom.

Other projects with the community involve the use of the metaverse and new technologies to create a virtual reality of the Moai and culturally significant sites. This aims to educate the population on the importance of protecting this and

other indigenous communities. The law firm also collaborated in developing the “Pacific Leaders’ Summit for Ocean Protection and the Challenge of Plastic and Microplastic Pollution” (2024), held on Easter Island. This event brought together representatives from various nations, environmental organisations, community leaders and experts to address the urgent need to protect marine ecosystems in the Pacific, as well as the importance of defining strategies to mitigate the effects of plastic pollution, rising sea levels, and to develop conservation policies for local communities among other environmental challenges. It facilitated exchanges to promote international agreements that encourage sustainable policies and conservation practices to protect the Pacific oceans, biodiversity, and cultural heritage.

Colombara Estrategia Legal’s commitment focuses on reaffirming indigenous rights and strengthening their capacity to make decisions regarding their lands and territories. The firm has promoted indigenous consultation processes and training on topics of interest to the island community to enhance the defence of their rights and cultural heritage.

This pro bono action by Colombara Estrategia Legal with the Rapa Nui people is based on the fact that they are one of the nine indigenous peoples constitutionally recognised in Chile, distinguished by having a specific

“The firm has promoted indigenous consultation processes and training on topics of interest to the island community to enhance the defence of their rights and cultural heritage.”

territory on Easter Island, and by the risk of patrimonial and cultural damage they are exposed to. The firm takes on this cause with conviction, as part of its social responsibility philosophy, respecting their internal decisions while promoting explicit recognition from the Chilean state of their culture and traditions.

The Human Rights and Public Law Division at Colombara Estrategia Legal focuses on the defence and promotion of human rights, as well as legal advice on public law issues, especially in relation to indigenous communities and other vulnerable populations. It is led by partners **Ciro Colombara** and **Aldo Díaz** and includes a team of professionals with excellent training in the field, with practical experience in these matters: coordinator **Jennifer Alfaro** and associate attorneys **Amanda de la Fuente** and **Benjamín Gutiérrez** have worked integrally and strategically for the respect and protection of the Rapa Nui people.

Individual profile:

Pro Bono Development

LINA MOYA ORTIZ, GÓMEZ-PINZÓN (COLOMBIA)



For over 15 years, Gómez-Pinzón has been committed to building a strong pro bono practice across Colombia and Latin

America, under the leadership of Paula Samper. A clear testament to this is that the firm is the only one in Colombia – and one of the few in Latin America – to have a full-time Pro Bono Coordinator since 2014, allowing us to lead high-impact projects.

When I took on this role, I inherited a platform that, while already impactful, had significant potential for growth. Key areas I've focused on include:

- i. increasing the number of cases taken on and successfully managed;
- ii. achieving 100% partner participation in pro bono work in 2023;
- iii. prioritising cases aligned with our Diversity and Inclusion pillars, handled by committee lawyers, ensuring access to justice for marginalised communities;

- iv. creating mentorship programmes that pair top pro bono lawyers with those facing challenges in taking on such work; and
- v. ensuring all lawyers contribute at least 20 individual pro bono hours, with over 95% meeting our 30-hour target.

These initiatives have expanded our pro bono efforts and have also allowed us to better serve the communities in need.



I am extremely fortunate to have the continuous support of Paula Samper, our Pro Bono Director Partner. Her unwavering commitment to pro bono work and the growth of the practice she founded has been essential to our success. Open communication has allowed me to present new initiatives and receive her invaluable guidance. With over 15 years of experience, Paula's expertise has been crucial in refining these initiatives to maximise their impact. The combination of ongoing communication and rigorous impact measurement has been key to strengthening our pro bono practice. It is essential for pro bono leaders to embrace new ideas, particularly those from younger generations.

This initiative was born from recognising the barriers preventing lawyers from engaging in more pro bono work. Many of our lawyers specialise in corporate advisory and rarely handle litigation, particularly in family, labour, criminal and immigration law, the most common fields of law in pro bono. This lack of exposure leads to a fear of unfamiliarity, preventing them from taking on pro bono cases.

To address this, I introduced a mentorship programme supported by top pro bono lawyers with more experience in family, criminal and labour law (even if they don't dedicate to these fields of law but already know the procedure), who mentor those new to these fields, while I personally provide mentorship in immigration cases, since that is my field of expertise. In this model, the mentored lawyer takes

responsibility for the case under their name, leading the actions, while the mentor offers guidance during the initial meetings, provides case templates, and reviews final documents.

This approach has proven to be highly effective. It not only empowers lawyers to take on cases in areas they had little experience with, but also fosters professional growth by expanding their legal expertise. The success of this model has positioned us as a leading firm regarding family and immigration cases taken on through Fundación ProBono Colombia.

By pairing mentorship with hands-on experience, we've been able to build a more confident, versatile team of lawyers, while making a meaningful impact on marginalised communities in need. This initiative demonstrates how leadership, collaboration, and continuous learning can strengthen pro bono practices, ultimately benefiting both the legal professionals involved and the clients they serve.

“This initiative demonstrates how leadership, collaboration, and continuous learning can strengthen pro bono practices, ultimately benefiting both the legal professionals involved and the clients they serve.”



“Pro bono hours increased from 4,620 (2020) to 6,217 (2023), a 34.56% growth over three years.”

This project wouldn't have been possible without the invaluable work of our mentors: Juan Pablo Perdomo (Family), Lina Tapiero (Labour Law) and Sandra Ramón (Criminal Law). For my part, I truly enjoyed assuming the mentoring for immigration cases.

Lawyers often hesitate to step outside their comfort zones and trust their skills in unfamiliar areas of law. Pro bono work sometimes involves simple tasks like creating an email account. To address this, I implemented a mentorship strategy for lawyers to be guided while navigating new fields of law.

To ensure pro bono work is prioritised, we developed personalised work plans for each lawyer, with continuous follow-up with reviews of reported hours and client feedback. I also foster empathy

by connecting Diversity and Inclusion Committee members with marginalised communities' cases. Additionally, I encourage lawyers to lead initial meetings – preferably in person or via video call – to build stronger connections with clients.

Pro bono hours increased from 4,620 (2020) to 6,217 (2023), a 34.56% growth over three years, surpassing the average of firms in Colombia. Lawyers involved in pro bono rose from 141 (2020) to 175 (2023). In April 2021, the firm managed 200 active cases from Fundación ProBono Colombia, totalling 300 pro bono cases. Currently, the firm handles over 750 cases from Fundación ProBono Colombia and more than 800 in total. Partner participation grew from 75% (2021) to 100% (2023).

Achieving 100% partner participation in pro bono work reinforces leadership commitment. Through mentoring, I encouraged more lawyers to take on immigration cases, especially in Colombia's current context. We have an unprecedented case intake rate.

Individual profile:

Focus on Social Mobility

Galicia

MARIANA HERRERO, GALICIA ABOGADOS (MEXICO)



The idea for our social mobility programme came from multiple sources:

- i. our firm's commitment to attract and develop the best talent from all backgrounds;
 - ii. the understanding that Mexico is an incredibly unequal country where people from underprivileged backgrounds have little to no opportunities to access good jobs where they can develop their full potential and change their own and their family's life, the legal market being no different;
 - iii. working closely with Abogadas MX and the scholarship programme, which has allowed the organisation to reach young female lawyers from public universities and provide them with tools to close the education gaps they may have and access to work in top-tier law firms;
 - iv. a true belief that, as lawyers, we have the obligation to do more for our society.
- Getting buy-in from senior leadership wasn't difficult because the DE&I Committee and the Executive Committee work very closely to make sure that our DE&I policies and initiatives are present in the firm's strategy. This is easy because Mariana is both a member of the Diversity and the Executive Committee, which helps for these initiatives to be discussed quickly; also with the participation of the Talent Committee, which is constantly trying to have a more objective recruitment process that allows us to attract the best talent from all backgrounds.
- One of the challenges is making sure that the people we recruit for this programme are able to take full advantage of the opportunity and that they believe that they belong. They also receive training to address any educational gaps they may have, which includes ongoing studies in the English language. Another challenge is making sure they always feel safe and comfortable and really learn and hopefully start a very successful career.



It is still early to measure the impact of the programme long-term but the lawyers themselves who talk about the opportunity to work in a safe place where they have a good salary and access to training and relevant work say it has changed their lives and opened their eyes to a different world of work that they never thought they would have access to. For us, doing this for just one person, especially young women, is completely worth it.

I am proud of how easy the programme has been to implement and the excellent response from all the associates of the firm to help it become successful. I am also very proud of our students and how

“...it has changed their lives and opened their eyes to a different world of work that they never thought they would have access to.”

well they are doing. When you see them working and doing their best to succeed at the firm, you do feel like a proud mum sometimes.

This is a programme that is here to stay and we will continue to work on making it better and better, and to be able to recruit more people and, little by little, maybe help create a more equal country.

Individual profile:

Focus on Social Mobility

FERRERE

SEBASTIÁN RAMOS, FERRERE (URUGUAY)



FERRERERE Transforma, our community impact platform, aims to contribute to the sustainability of the

organisations we support from the heart of our business: the capabilities of our practitioners.

This is why we designed Experiencia FERRERE, because we see it as a programme that allows us to use our abilities to relate directly with the population we define. We have built this programme to bolster adolescents from critical contexts in their personal development and future in the workforce.

“FERRERE practitioners offer technical and soft-skill courses, providing useful tools for students to be better prepared as they take their first steps in the workplace.”

This programme arose as an expansion and enhancement of a tutorship programme we had started in 2015 with Liceo Jubilar high school. In 2019 we were joined by Fundación Salir Adelante, and we also wanted to be involved with a larger group of students. These decisions and initiatives were discussed in the framework of one of our committees that addresses these subjects, which we call FERRERE Transforma.

The partners heading up the FERRERE Transforma programme were there for the platform’s launch; they participated in the assessments of how we had related to the organisations earlier and how we would do so going forward. Hence, from the start they were convinced of how it would be: from the heart of our business and bringing our people together with the beneficiaries of these organisations (and not solely via economic donations).

We offer tutoring on their first steps at the university, professional immersion, training and internships.

- Tutoring: Young Ferrere practitioners become tutors to youths from critical contexts on their first steps at the university. When young people from

such contexts become university students, they frequently do not have family referents who have done tertiary studies, and the contact with our young professionals better equips them to deal with this difficult stage.

- Immersion: At Ferrere, in Montevideo's Old City – its chief business centre – students spend three days getting to know first-hand what it's like to work at one of the region's largest professional services firms, in areas as diverse as Consultancy, Legal, Marketing and Human Resources, among others. The experience includes joining one of the firm's teams, where they are assigned specific tasks, sharing the workday with practitioners in the field and other students, and even visiting clients, so they can discover the reality of companies in other areas of activity.
- Training: FERRERE practitioners offer technical and soft-skill courses, providing useful tools for students to be better prepared as they take their first steps in the workplace (ABCs of Word, Power Point and Excel; Job Insertion Workshop; Effective Oral Presentations).
- Internships: With the intention of coming full circle in our support to these youths, we began offering remunerated three-month internships to students who have had previous experience of the programme.

The beneficiaries of these efforts are youths involved with civil society

educational organisations, who have completed the selection process conducted by FERRERE's Sustainability Committee.

The selection of organisations we support is made in an objective process of annual candidacies. Interested organisations complete a form that can be downloaded from our website, for which they have until 31 December of each year to apply. At the start of the year, the firm's Sustainability Committee meets to evaluate and select the organisations most in line with the purpose defined.

The programme had (and from time to time still encounters) challenges that, luckily, we have always managed to resolve, because the final goal is what



counts most. The most common is our practitioners' time availability, which is always a challenge in pro bono work. The truth is that, to surmount these aspects, the support of the entire team, and even of the clients who receive them with open arms, has been fundamental.

Other challenges we have encountered and have overcome with everyone's support are:

- Indicators: they must be tied to the programme's objective. This was resolved by talking to the beneficiary organisations, pondering which indicators would be the most appropriate, and how we could achieve them.

“...it fills us with pride to know that more than 50 students from critical contexts have already been part of this process, and that we have been able to contribute to a better kick-off for them at the university and in the workforce.”

- Reaching young people in the best way: starting with training in hard and soft skills for our tutors.

The programme fulfils various objectives:

- i. Contributing to the professional development and workplace integration of youths from critical contexts, offering them tools, skills and practice.
- ii. Strengthening the proposal of civil society organisations whose purpose relates to education for young people from critical contexts.
- iii. Offering our collaborators a programme where they can channel volunteer actions allowing them to interact directly with the beneficiary population.
- iv. From our position of leadership, we strive to spread good practices to our stakeholders via a programme that comes directly from the heart of our business.

In terms of results, it fills us with pride to know that more than 50 students from critical contexts have already been part of this process, and that we have been able to contribute to a better kick-off for them at the university and in the workforce.

Brazil Chapter

Introduction



Mateus Monteiro

Head of Brazil Research

It is always a pleasure when we have good news to share. We are glad to say that, once again, the number of firms showcasing their DEI initiatives has increased this year. The joy comes not only from a quantitative perspective, but also from the quality of the work presented. We can see the Brazilian legal market engaging in serious, innovative and lifechanging actions in order to build a more diverse and welcoming work environment.

Amongst the many DEI challenges that the Brazilian legal market faces, this year we identified a strong trend of firms reporting effective measures regarding racial equality as well as transgender rights and inclusion.

“...hiring black employees is not enough, but it is necessary to support and invest in the training and development of these talents, from internship to partnership.”

When it comes to initiatives related to underrepresented ethnicities, at least three common aspects called our attention: firstly, firms are acknowledging that racism is a reality and that a structural change is needed; secondly, there is a consistent effort to bring awareness, from the lowest to the highest positions, to the importance of racial diversity within the firms; and finally, firms’ are understanding that their responsibilities go beyond the numbers. This means that hiring black employees is not enough, but it is necessary to support and invest in the training and development of these talents, from internship to partnership.

The results of the engagement of the big firms in these affirmative actions can be seen in the increasing presence of black lawyers in these workplaces. Also, firms report that clients are raising racial diversity as a decisive hiring condition. However, we are aware that there is a long way to go in order to reach a more equitable and inclusive market. This challenge, while significant in itself, is even bigger when we consider the presence of black lawyers – especially women – in market-leading firms and in top positions.

“The market has been raising awareness and supporting transgender people, helping them to rectify documents, report transphobic behaviour and keep updated with current legislation.”

Also, as mentioned before, this year we are excited to see firms submitting inspiring initiatives related to the transgender community. The market has been raising awareness and supporting transgender people, helping them to rectify documents, report transphobic behaviour and keep updated with current legislation.

As a company that has diversity as one of our core values, we want to celebrate firms' DEI initiatives. We are happy to share with you some of the projects that stood out to us, and we hope that this will inspire you, your firm and your community to make a difference.

Individual profile:

DEMAREST

Advancing Black Lawyers

ROBSON DE OLIVEIRA, DEMAREST ADVOGADOS



Structural challenges are currently the reality for Black lawyers in Brazil, since while affirmative policies in

universities have significantly increased the enrolment of Black students in graduation law courses, this inclusion is not yet proportionally reflected in the job market. In this sense, many Black lawyers face barriers when entering big law firms or securing leadership positions. Structural racism remains a significant barrier, and the representation of Black lawyers in large law firms is still limited. This scenario shows that while education has been democratized for many Black people, the legal market still faces deep obstacles to ensuring a real and equitable inclusion.

I believe the first big step I took was breaking the barrier of big law firms, since participating and being selected in a selection process from a space occupied by very few Black people certainly encourages other professionals to understand that it is possible to

overcome obstacles. This is fundamental. After that, it was necessary to recognise the urgent need to promote structural changes. As co-founder of D Raizes (an initiative that promotes the inclusion and racial equity at Demarest Advogados) I started internal dialogues to raise awareness about the importance of racial diversity and its benefits for the quality of the legal work.

Additionally, I am the General Coordinator of the project named Incluir Direito, which is an initiative of the Center for the Study of Law Firms, created to increase the presence of Black lawyers in big law firms by offering training and mentorship, as well as seeking to remove institutional barriers. Also, I am actively involved in the Legal Alliance for Racial Equity, an initiative which involved the 12 largest law firms in the country with the goal of increasing the representation of Black lawyers in the sector. This effort resulted in a significant increase in the presence of Black lawyers, from less than 1% to 11.4% in under a decade, demonstrating that actively seeking out talent, raising awareness and removing barriers can lead to considerable changes in the legal market.

“...actively seeking out talent, raising awareness and removing barriers can lead to considerable changes in the legal market.”

Moreover, during my master’s studies, I combined my area of expertise, real estate law, with racial issues. My dissertation addressed the acquisition of land by Quilombola communities in Brazil, a topic that directly reflects my commitment to integrating racial issues into the legal field in historically disadvantaged areas.

Demarest has always been welcoming to inclusion and diversity initiatives. The challenges were mainly structural, since racism is deeply rooted in all institutions, which resist recognising racism. We are continually overcoming these challenges by raising awareness through lectures and workshops on the importance of diversity and showing, through concrete examples, that inclusion benefits everyone.

One of the most positive aspects of this journey was the recognition of the law firm’s clients, who started to normalise the presence of black lawyers in major legal transactions, including those with an international impact. This recognition demonstrated that by creating an inclusive environment, we not only strengthened the law firm, but also changed the external perspective on the ability of black lawyers to lead highly complex and relevant transactions.

I am most proud, first of all, of the impact of the Incluir Direito project. It was not

only responsible for increasing the presence of black lawyers in big law firms but also has received several awards, including the prestigious Innovare Award, one of the main recognitions in the legal sector in Brazil. This award reaffirms the relevance and positive impact that our actions have had on the legal sector.

During this period I had the opportunity to be Chairman of the Commission on Racial Equality of the Brazilian Bar Association, São Paulo Section, where I was the rapporteur of a decision that recognised the practice of racism by a lawyer and excluded him from the ranks of this important institution representing the class, which supervises the practice of the profession, as well as being responsible for transforming the commission from special to permanent.

Finally, I’m also proud of the change in the internal culture of the law firms. Demarest has adopted diversity as a core value, and today, not just in recruitment, but in all areas, inclusion is a priority. The work environment is inclusive; I’ve been at the firm for almost 17 years; I hold a high position, represent the institution and take part in major legal transactions. This cultural transformation is a reflection of the institutional commitment to racial equity, ensuring that progress is sustainable and long-lasting.

Individual profile:

Advancing Black Lawyers



LIVIA CALDAS BRITO, BMA ADVOGADOS



The situation for black lawyers in Brazil is still one of significant disparity. While black professionals have increasingly

entered the legal field, they remain underrepresented, especially in high-ranking positions within law firms and legal institutions. This reality is a legacy of structural racial inequality, which has limited professional opportunities for the black community and fostered unconscious bias over generations, further impacting access to opportunities.

According to the 2018 Legal Census, less than 1% of lawyers in the nine largest law firms in the country were black. Although this figure rose to 11% in 2022, black lawyers still face barriers to equitable representation, particularly in leadership roles. While there have been advances, particularly with affirmative action policies and diversity initiatives, substantial efforts are still needed to create a genuinely inclusive environment in the legal profession.

“This reality is a legacy of structural racial inequality, which has limited professional opportunities for the black community and fostered unconscious bias over generations.”

My first step was to immerse myself in affirmative action discussions at the University of Brasília, which helped shape my understanding of systemic barriers for black professionals. Later, I became the Director of Racial Equity at the Federal District Bar Association (OAB/DF), a newly created position aimed at promoting racial equity within the legal field.

In this role, I initiated and led several impactful projects, such as the Elections Observatory, which monitors political party fund allocations for black and female candidates. At BMA, I also helped establish the first mentorship programme exclusively for black interns, providing essential support for their career development and fostering a pipeline of talented black legal professionals.



The first challenge I faced throughout my career was never having a black boss or close colleague. This lack of representation certainly impacted me, as I often had to navigate the unique challenges of being a black woman in law firm on my own. Black professionals, like myself, often confront unconscious bias and face unique experiences tied to their racial identity. As we advance in our careers the professional spaces we occupy can become lonelier, as there are even fewer colleagues with whom we can share similar experiences.

Realising this, I decided that beyond my role as a litigation lawyer I needed to use the path I had forged to help pave the way for new black lawyers. I addressed these challenges by building alliances and fostering dialogue within the legal community, leveraging my role to create educational programmes and awareness campaigns. Today, I am pleased to see that more young black professionals are entering and advancing in major law firms, a sign that our collective efforts toward inclusivity are beginning to show tangible results.

I am particularly proud of the mentorship programme for black interns at BMA, an initiative that represents a significant step

“I also helped establish the first mentorship programme exclusively for black interns, providing essential support for their career development and fostering a pipeline of talented black legal professionals.”

toward long-term systemic change. As I already mentioned, the career path for a black lawyer striving for leadership roles can often feel isolating. So, in developing this mentorship programme, I was inspired to create something that would have made a difference for me as a young intern. This programme provides a space for shared experiences, understanding and support, helping make the journey less solitary and more encouraging.

Recently, an intern I mentored was promoted to an associate position at BMA, an accomplishment that fills me with pride and hope. It’s a powerful indication that we’re moving in the right direction, creating pathways for black professionals to not only enter but thrive in the legal field.

Case study:

Advancing Black Lawyers

Trench
Rossi
Watanabe.

TRENCH ROSSI WATANABE

“Through these partnerships, we offer scholarships, mentoring and training for black students and professionals.”

Currently, black lawyers in Brazil are underrepresented in leadership positions and face challenges related to systemic barriers in the legal profession. Although the Perfil ADV survey shows that 33.32% of lawyers registered in the Brazilian Bar Association are black, this number is still far from ideal, especially considering Brazil’s racial composition. In the scenario of large firms, as evidenced by research by the Center for the Study of Labor Relations and Inequalities (CEERT) and the Legal Alliance for Racial Equity, a project that brings together the largest law firms in Brazil to promote the racial agenda in the legal market, the presence of black lawyers is even more limited (11% in São Paulo in 2022).

In order to combat this underrepresentation, we support initiatives such as the “Programa Prosseguir” (“Persue Program”), CEERT’s Scholarship Program, which consists of supporting black students’ time with

quality at university and their insertion into the job market, through the firms that make up the Aliança Jurídica pela Equidade Racial (Legal Alliance for Racial Equity), and the Projeto Incluir Direito (Include Law Project) by Cesa (Center for Law Firm Studies). Both projects aim to improve access and representation of black students and professionals in the legal field, representing a gradual but significant change towards equity in the sector.

We actively collaborate with organisations that support the inclusion of black lawyers, including the Aliança Jurídica pela Equidade Racial (Legal Alliance for Racial Equity), Incluir Direito (Include Law) and Talento Total (Total Talent). Through these partnerships, we offer scholarships, mentoring and training for black students and professionals. The Prosseguir Program grants scholarships to black students, and we reserve 31% of internship

vacancies for black students as part of the Incluir Direito Project.

In addition to these efforts, in 2024 we launched the Trench Rossi Watanabe Institute (ITRW), an initiative that promotes social mobility and democratises access to the legal profession for black, brown and indigenous people through education. These collaborations range from financial support for scholarships to the maintenance of scholarship students, in a partnership signed with the Endowment GV, sponsorship of students to take regular English courses through the Cidadão Pró-Mundo. We have also signed a partnership with the Black Sisters in Law collective, an organisation dedicated to helping black female lawyers expand their careers internationally in the corporate legal sector. The partnership consists of workshops on areas of law that are not commonly discussed in universities, as well as prioritising 20 seats on the English course promoted by Cidadão Pró-Mundo.

One of the main challenges was to identify and eliminate the obstacles that made it impossible to include black professionals, especially in the selection processes that had requirements such as fluency in English, graduation from renowned universities, among others. To overcome these biases, it was essential to promote a culture of awareness and continuous education about the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion. Eliminating these barriers was essential to change the initially

inexpressive scenario of black lawyers in large firms (less than 1% in São Paulo in 2019) to the 11% level presented in 2022, as mentioned above.

We also work internally with the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, created over 20 years ago and formed and led by partners from the firm. The Committee has the active participation of our leaders, with an annual budget and business plan intended for DE&I actions. Through the DE&I Committee, we work with six Affinity Groups (Ethnic Racial, Gender Equity, People with Disabilities, Religions, LGBTQIA+ and Generations), which meet periodically and are open to all lawyers and staff at the firm.

We also established MOVE and MOVE Unidos, programmes that promote DE&I with awareness-raising actions, training on unconscious prejudices and inclusive policies for our internal public and also with our clients and partners. We also invest in career mentoring, affirmative policies and inclusive recruitment selection processes. Recently, now in 2024, we have expanded these efforts with the creation of the Trench Rossi Watanabe Institute, as described above.

Our commitment to inclusion and diversity in the legal sector is reflected in the demographics of our team: we currently have 2% people with Asian heritage, 79% white and 18% black. In addition, since 1996 our firm has been proud of its female protagonism, which today is reflected in 61% of our staff. We are also aware that a multigenerational

composition enriches our vision and approach - 31% of professionals are over 40 and 68% between 20 and 40 years old.

Our work in DE&I has had a measurable impact on the development of black lawyers and their visibility in the legal sector. From 2018 to date, considering the Trench Experience, our seasonal internship programme held in January and July, and Incluir Direito, we have impacted 213 students, 32% of whom are black. It's also worth mentioning that we hired 18 students through Incluir Direito and three interns who joined TRW through Trench Experience. We also have mentoring programmes within Incluir Direito and internally for our black people, with the participation of 16 professionals, including senior lawyers and partners.

We have 31% of internship vacancies at the firm for black students and the support of the Trench Rossi Watanabe Institute in programmes such as Black Sisters in Law and Amigos Direito UERJ, thus expanding access for underrepresented groups. In addition, with regular training on unconscious prejudice, mentioned above, we seek to strengthen an inclusive and equitable culture, which is recognised by the São Paulo City Hall's Human Rights and Diversity Seal and by various other awards and entities. These actions have increased awareness and engagement about diversity in the legal sector and in society.

We are proud of all the projects we support and the actions we take at the

“We have also noticed that this investment is increasingly on the agenda and demanded by our clients and is even a decisive factor in hiring our legal services.”

firm to promote racial inclusion in the legal market. As an example, we can cite the work carried out by the Legal Alliance for Racial Equity, which consolidated its six years of work with the launch of the book “Diversity and Inclusion in Law: promoting racial equity in the Brazilian legal profession”, a collection of articles on diversity and inclusion in law, organised to commemorate the six years since the Alliance was created.

With all these actions put into practice for years by our firm, which is strongly recognised in the market for its DE&I actions, we have been able to see that the active participation of leaders and partners is essential. We have also noticed that this investment is increasingly on the agenda and demanded by our clients and is even a decisive factor in hiring our legal services.

We know, however, that there is still a lot to be done and we are humble enough to admit that although we have been recognised by various awards and entities in the legal and corporate market, there is still a lot to be done and that we need to continue investing more and more in affirmative and inclusive policies.

Case study:

Trans Rights and Inclusion

**Tozzini
Freire.**
ADVOGADOS

TOZZINFREIRE ADVOGADOS

“In 2023, job opportunities for transgender people decreased 57%, leaving only 4% of transgender people and transvestites employed in the formal labour market.”

Brazil has the highest rates of homicide and violence against trans people in the world. In 2023, job opportunities for transgender people decreased 57%, leaving only 4% of transgender people and transvestites employed in the formal labour market. The root of the problem is in educational barriers, since 72% of transgender individuals do not have access to a complete high school education. One in four transgender individuals is unemployed, representing the highest unemployment rate within the LGBTQIA+ community.

This cycle of exclusion not only strips them of educational opportunities but also severely limits their prospects for skill development and employment. Over the last few years, the rates of transphobia increased significantly, having become one of the most frequent

topics of political campaigns, fighting against the rights of the trans community.

We believe in a transformative approach, both internally and externally. Internally, our primary focus is on affirmative actions and the empowerment of transgender individuals. Since 2018, we have affirmative programmes that enhance access to the job market and support career development. We have positions that are exclusive for trans employees, provide scholarships for trans people to learn English and share job vacancies through partnerships with organisations dedicated to advancing transgender inclusion.

We also have an internal policy to rectify the documents of our trans employees that wish to do so, respecting their social name (name with which they identify) and gender identity regardless of the rectification. Since 2016, we have an affinity group called TFAffinity for welcoming, development, and internal exchanges promoting the LGBTI+ theme.

Externally, we have initiatives both for individual rights and systemic transformation. We carry out joint efforts to rectify the documents of



trans people sheltered by NGOs (Casa Florescer and Casa João Nery), also covering the costs of such proceedings. All volunteers received training about gender identity, rights of trans people and technical aspects of the rectification in a humanised and respectful way.

In 2018, we carried out all-encompassing research on the right for surgery in the public health system in Brazil, providing a pathway for the advocacy strategy of a local NGO (Barong). In 2024, we filed a petition as *amicus curiae* in the Supreme Court representing Barong and Casa Chama (two NGOs) to fight for the right of trans people in the health system with respect to their gender identity and, simultaneously, biological sex, allowing the respect to their names and pronouns (gender identity) and access to medical specialities according to the biological sex (for instance, gynaecology, obstetrics, etc).

Finally, we have developed booklets on transgender individuals and their rights, which are available for free on our website. These booklets not only enhance access to rights for the transgender community but also promote awareness among the general public. The topics include:

- i. understanding the LGBT+ community (2018);
- ii. rights of trans children and adolescents to education (2021);
- iii. step-by-step to rectify documents (2024).

We collaborate on this work with the following organisations:

- Casa Florescer and Casa João Nery: shelters and services for vulnerable transgender individuals. We carry out joint efforts to rectify the documents of the individuals they shelter and conduct round tables to explain their rights;

“The scenario is worsened by the lack of adequate training for public agents about gender identity, leading to legislative misinterpretations, procedural delays, or even transphobic behaviour.”

- Casa Chama: an NGO created for and by transgender people. We assist with their corporate and institutional matters (for instance, updating bylaws), conduct training sessions (for instance, about mediation and communication tools for conflict management) and contribute to advocacy efforts (such as a Technical Note against a Bill of Law that violated rights of LGBT+ in the State of São Paulo);
- Barong: this entity develops projects for the implementation and promotion of sexual and reproductive health, notably for LGBT+ and transgender people. We support with institutional matters and with positive impact initiatives, such as:
 - i. research on trans surgery (2018);
 - ii. round table with trans sex workers about their rights (2023);
 - iii. amicus curiae in the Supreme Court on the rights of trans people in the health system (2024);
 - iv. legal advice to trans individuals on the right to rectification (2023).

The systemic discrimination against trans people is the core challenge that

has multiple impacts on the Brazilian society and, therefore, on our initiatives. Regarding document rectification, excessive and inconsistent bureaucracy often slows the process. The scenario is worsened by the lack of adequate training for public agents about gender identity, leading to legislative misinterpretations, procedural delays, or even transphobic behaviour.

Additionally, due to discrimination and violence, many trans people are subject to economic vulnerability, were abandoned by the family at young ages, and now lack knowledge about their origins and the place in which their birth certificate was registered, meaning they don't have a valid voter registration (a requirement to rectify the documents).

While our firm implements affirmative policies and external programmes, cultural resistance and the need for extensive internal training can hinder progress, especially because the culture of prejudice within organisations and social and legal structures continues to create insecurity and fear of exposure to violence for these individuals.

Finally, ongoing legal changes, reactionary political movements, the

absence of a solid legislative foundation, and inconsistent jurisprudence demand our team to remain vigilant and up to date, making it difficult to predict outcomes and provide consistent legal guidance.

Through our partnership with Casa João Ney and Casa Florescer, since December 2022 we conducted six joint efforts for rectification, with 39 people assisted, and over 730 hours of work. The project inspired several clients to develop their own rectification programmes (both to employees and external publics).

As a result of our internal initiatives and raising awareness, three members of the firm (including one partner) have shared that they understood that close relatives were trans people and welcomed such people in their transitions.

In October 2024, the constitutional lawsuit in which we filed an amicus curiae petition (among many other civil society organisations) was ruled in favour of LGBT rights, acknowledging the need for adjustments in the public health system to respect gender identities and sexual orientations.

Finally, in August 2024 we launched a booklet with guidelines on the

“In October 2024, the constitutional lawsuit in which we filed an amicus curiae petition (among many other civil society organisations) was ruled in favour of LGBT rights, acknowledging the need for adjustments in the public health system to respect gender identities and sexual orientations.”

rectification of transgender people to assist in the process. This initiative was essential to provide access to information since people outside the law field may struggle to understand the steps and carry out the procedure. The material contributes to ensure that individuals who cannot have access to external support can still obtain the necessary information to rectify their documents. By doing so, we expand our impact on this essential cause and promote greater inclusion.

Europe Chapter

Introduction



Marlene Hermann
EMEA Research Director

Chambers and Partners is dedicated to promoting diverse and inclusive working cultures. The Global DEI Report (the Report) looks at the initiatives undertaken by firms through a number of case studies and profiles.

Over the years, DEI has become increasingly important in Europe, with law firms and their clients alike recognising the need for greater inclusion. However, there continue to be notable differences across the continent in terms of gender equality, gender visibility in the legal sphere and recognition and equality for the LGBTQ+ community.

Two themes have stood out in Europe this year: the prevention of gender violence and harassment, and protecting LGBTQ+ rights.

“These initiatives have led to increased awareness of gender-based harassment and internal committees dedicated to promoting equality, and more women coming forward to report cases of harassment.”

Our first theme relates to the prevention of gender violence and harassment. In Europe, there continues to be a discussion about the impact of gender on work opportunities, wages and expectations. In several jurisdictions, women feel unable to report harassment either with clients or in the workplace for fear of retribution, be this loss of opportunity or changes to expectations or professional relationships. Several case studies explore the impact of associations and policies

developed by lawyers in Spain to promote equality, to create safe spaces to report harassment and provide support and training. These initiatives have led to increased awareness of gender-based harassment and internal committees dedicated to promoting equality, and more women coming forward to report cases of harassment.

Our second theme relates to LGBTQ+ rights and highlights the need for alliances covering all aspects of LGBTQ+. In some jurisdictions, lesbian and gay rights have been widely accepted, with more focus now devoted to ensuring trans and queer rights. One case study discusses the activities law firms have undertaken to establish clear alliances and policies internally to ensure equality and support for all. Another highlights the pro bono work that is in progress in some jurisdictions to acknowledge and change conceptions regarding all members of this community. The case studies demonstrate that providing support and alliances can enact crucial change at many levels and provide an important legal basis for furthering equality.

Across Europe we continue to see a need for change and individuals driving this change forward, from both a gender equality and LGTBQ+ standpoint. As part of our research for Chambers Europe, we have introduced new referee rules to ensure that individuals at all levels, from associate to senior partner, have the option to provide referees, thereby increasing representation outside of the top level. Researchers also undergo training specifically around diversity and inclusion concepts, including asking about female lawyers active in particular fields.

“Across Europe we continue to see a need for change and individuals driving this change forward, from both a gender equality and LGTBQ+ standpoint.”

“In central, eastern and southern Europe, we typically have higher percentages of women in our rankings, with Romania leading the way at 56%.”

Of our current rankings, only 22.3% are women, an increase from previous years but still far below what we would like, and this continues to be an area of focus for the team. However, there is great variety across Europe. In central, eastern and southern Europe, we typically have higher percentages of women in our rankings, with Romania leading the way at 56%. We hear much more about gender diversity and equity policies in western Europe, but to date this hasn't translated into high levels of women in senior positions and, by extension, in our rankings. We look forward to continuing to monitor these developments and collaborate with the legal profession to advance DEI.

Individual profile:

Deloitte.
Legal

Preventing Gender Violence and Harassment

DELOITTE LEGAL (SPAIN)

“...the existing equality plans at Deloitte have been updated and adapted with the goal of continuing to advance our commitment to equality, implementing measures and actions to prevent discrimination and to promote gender equality, thereby creating significant social change that positively impacts the organisation and society.”

The right to equality and non-discrimination between women and men is a universal legal principle recognised in various international human rights normative texts and is enshrined as a fundamental right in the Spanish Constitution.

The specific regulation on equality in our internal legal system was created with the aim of promoting and ensuring that the principle of equal treatment and opportunities becomes a reality, combating both direct and indirect discrimination based on sex in key areas such as access to employment, professional promotion, wage policy, working and employment conditions, and vocational training.

Based on this regulation, the existing equality plans at Deloitte have been

updated and adapted with the goal of continuing to advance our commitment to equality, implementing measures and actions to prevent discrimination and to promote gender equality, thereby creating significant social change that positively impacts the organisation and society.

Some of the main objectives of the Equality Plan are as follows:

- Promoting the principle of equal treatment and opportunities.
- Ensuring a selection and hiring process for professionals without gender biases.
- Promoting and facilitating women's access to all categories and departments where they are under-represented, aiming for balance.



- Continuing to promote measures to reconcile work, family and personal life without gender distinction.
- Promoting a performance evaluation system based on objective criteria that ensure equal treatment and conditions.

Once the objectives were established, we implemented a series of measures to ensure successful implementation across different teams, which posed a challenge. Some examples are:

- In the selection and hiring process:
 - Raising awareness among professionals involved in the selection processes about equality.
 - Announcing job offers using language and images that are not sexist and do not show gender stereotypes.
 - Ensuring a selection procedure based on objective and non-discriminatory criteria.
- In job classification:
 - Advancing towards a balanced presence of both sexes in the company's job positions and departments.
- In professional promotion:
 - Ensuring neutral and equal evaluation procedures.
 - Guaranteeing the same opportunities for everyone to participate in internal promotion processes.
- In training:
 - Promoting training activities that equally facilitate the development of skills and competencies, without gender distinction.
- In relation to remuneration:
 - Verifying the absence of a wage gap between women and men.
- In relation to work-life balance rights:
 - Facilitating the reconciliation of personal, family, and work life.
- In relation to the prevention of sexual harassment and gender-based harassment:
 - Ensuring a safe work environment, free from harassment and discrimination.

- Providing a clear, simple and quick procedure for resolving possible cases of harassment.
- Awareness and communication:
 - Involving all staff in awareness-raising and educational activities that promote equality, both within the workplace and in the family environment.

Our commitment to equality is reflected in the results of the situation assessments of the entities that make up Deloitte in Spain, on which our equality plan is based. These assessments demonstrate the firm's strong commitment to equal opportunities between women and men, as well as the implementation of measures to help eliminate and/or prevent inequalities and wage differences between men and women.

One of the firm's top priorities is to continue ensuring the consolidation of a work environment that respects dignity and non-discrimination based on sex. Therefore, in addition to the Equality Plan, a new Protocol for the Prevention and Eradication of Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment has been developed. This protocol includes measures aimed at addressing and eliminating harassment situations and is available to all professionals at the firm.

“One of the firm’s top priorities is to continue ensuring the consolidation of a work environment that respects dignity and non-discrimination based on sex.”

Having a defined plan and ensuring its implementation and compliance is the main achievement we have reached. Another significant achievement is ensuring that all professionals at the firm are aware of it, thanks to the communication campaign we have carried out: informing them of the approval of the Equality Plan, making it available on the corporate intranet, and facilitating access to it for everyone, including new hires from the very beginning.

Additionally, it is a great achievement to have a Monitoring Committee for the Equality Plan, responsible for ensuring compliance with the equality measures outlined in the plan, monitoring the implementation of the adopted measures, and analysing the effectiveness of the proposed measures.

Preventing Gender Violence and Harassment

PATRICIA MADRONA GARCIA,
ABDON PEDRAJAS/ LITTLER LAWYERS S.L.P (SPAIN)



I am Co-Founder and President of the Equality Observatory of the Bar Association of Valencia (ICAV). The Bar

Association is responsible for protecting lawyers against harassment and discrimination, which was not the case before the project was initiated.

Before taking any actions, I asked the Bar Association some information and also conducted a survey to better diagnose the situation, referring to studies indicating the percentage of women affected by inequality, discrimination, or harassment.

According to the information gathered, ICAV's membership comprises 49% women and 51% men. However, in ICAV's trainings, speakers were usually men: 62% in 2022. To reverse this situation, an agreement was reached with ICAV's Governing Board to ensure least 40% of speakers of each gender in all ICAV trainings.

Also, according to the survey, 66% of female lawyers have experienced

discrimination. 95% of legal practitioners are self-employed, with no place to report abuse. That's why I came up with the idea to prepare the first protocol for the prevention of harassment and violence against lawyers (ICAV).

ICAV's Equality Observatory, co-founded and led by me, was the first ever such observatory in Spain, and can be considered as a precedent. Currently it has inspired the creation of several equality observatories across the country.

One of the challenges was to get an agreement between most of the legal practitioners and the Bar Association of Valencia to set up the Observatory. I was convinced that an official institution will be listened to more carefully than individual women practitioners, becoming a tool to fight against inequality, discrimination and harassment. The observatory acts as the voice of lawyers who are victims of discrimination.

The Observatory's work inspires women practitioners to speak up and have the courage to confront inequality and harassment situations. Its leadership and dedication serves as a catalyst for women practitioners to realise their

power, particularly in the Bar organisation: in the ICAV election process, women practitioners constitute 49% of voters.

In most of ICAV's trainings, the gender equality agreement has been implemented. However, recent findings demonstrate that, in some areas, the agreement is not respected. Following my intervention, ICAV's Directors reminded those concerned that the agreement must be implemented. Ensuring gender equality does not happen automatically and constant monitoring is much needed.

Another of the most relevant impacts of my work occurred in November 2023. At that time the harassment prevention protocols were published. The possibility for ex officio defence counsels to resign from representing the client who has harassed them is a major innovation.

If harassed by a client, ex officio defence counsel can resign from and be replaced by another lawyer. Until now, this was impossible without serious negative consequences for the resigning counsel.

The Observatory is a body whose main objective is the promotion of the principle of equality and non-discrimination in the practice of law, designed to guarantee the effective equality of members within the framework of the functions of professional practice. The Observatory has a proactive role, seeking and proposing improvements, and a reactive role, reacting to discriminatory situations that require analysis and positioning. It is a great pride and also a great responsibility to be the President.

The second achievement of which I am personally most proud of is

“Ensuring gender equality does not happen automatically and constant monitoring is much needed.”

the development and approval of a harassment protocol for lawyers practising in the ICAV (approximately + 11,000). In Spain, companies of all kinds, including large firms, are obliged to comply with their work, sexual and gender-based harassment protocols, which are usually activated by filing a complaint with the company for which you are hired. However, this did not give enough protection to lawyers in Spain, since more than 90% are self-employed, and to date they had nowhere to claim protection.

The approval of this protocol makes it possible to protect, analyse and, where appropriate, adopt measures, in situations of harassment for all lawyers practising in the field of the ICAV, in a homogeneous manner and without distinction of whether they are employees or self-employed, and it does not penalise them in the allocation of cases in the public defence system.

Since the protocol was published, four harassment complaints have been filed and processed.

It is the voice of more than 11,000 lawyers who find themselves in a situation of inequality, often invisible, in gender matters.

Individual profile:

Protecting LGBT+ Rights

SZECSKAY

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

SAM MACMAHON BALDWIN, SZECSKAY ATTORNEYS AT LAW (HUNGARY)

“When Baldwin learned of this opportunity to promote and establish new legal instruments reducing ‘Obstacles to the Free Movement of Rainbow Families in the EU’, he decided at the time that he wanted to contribute.”



In 2021, the Hungarian parliament adopted a ‘child protection’ law which is publicly often referred to as the ‘anti-

gay law’. The law prohibits so-called ‘promotion’ of homosexuality towards persons under the age of 18. Additional legislative measures followed such as banning books aimed at, for example, 16 or 17-year-olds from being sold close to schools or churches if those books have content that portray or promote homosexuality. Bookstores are also

prohibited from placing such books in shop windows. And, when inside the shop, they must be sold in closed packaging, separately from other products.

The Hungarian authorities have started raiding and fining bookstores and chains for selling books with LGTBQ+ content. It was the objective of Hungary’s oldest and largest LGBTQ+ NGO to reach out to the European Commission for help; its goal being that the European Commission sues Hungary for this infringement of EU law.

In the process of finding grounds for declaring that the anti-gay measures are contrary to EU law, the NGO contacted Sam Baldwin, senior EU and competition lawyer at Szecskay Attorneys at Law, for help.

The cooperation between Baldwin and the NGO goes back to 2021 when the European Commission announced an initiative on legal recognition of cross-border parenthood. When Baldwin learned of this opportunity to promote and establish new legal instruments reducing ‘Obstacles to the Free Movement of Rainbow Families in the EU’, he decided at the time that he wanted to contribute.



The NGO was immediately enthusiastic about Baldwin's legal support and particularly his wealth of experience with the EU Commission. Both Baldwin and the NGO's legal counsel found their cooperation fruitful to the extent that Baldwin has remained an adviser ever since.

Regarding the legislative measures following the 'child protection' law, initially the NGO was in touch with the Commission; eventually Baldwin took over the communication and turned into the key contact for the Commission in the NGO's name for these matters.

Baldwin completed several submissions analysing the legal situation in Hungary, highlighting the possible conflicts with EU law based on Free Movement of Goods guaranteed in the EU Treaty. The revision of these requests for review is in progress. It is expected that during the course of 2024 the European Commission will make its standpoint known and act accordingly.

While in 2023 alone, Baldwin invested more than 50 hours into legal advice for this NGO, the issue of the restricted sale of books made up the majority of this time. 50 hours of legal work is a lot for a comparably small law firm from Hungary – invested by one lawyer advising one NGO besides the pro bono work that other lawyers in the firm are

doing. There is also a serious need for this kind advocacy in Hungary. The time and effort invested by Baldwin has made a substantial difference for this cause in Hungary, not just within the organisation.

Besides Baldwin's immense dedication to the cause, the support and independence of Szecskey Attorneys at Law has to be considered as a strong influencing factor in the success of this project. Szecskey prides itself as an independent Hungarian law firm. This key message incorporates both the independence from global law firms and the political independence in the country. The firm is known for its professional excellency, and so the team finds itself on occasion dealing with matters for or against the Hungarian government. The firm's pro bono work symbolises what its members stand for at heart and what each of them believe in.

András Szecskey, the firm's managing partner, says: "Our firm is very flexible in supporting the pro bono work of team members. We don't have a strict policy on who has to spend how much time assisting certain causes. I motivate my team to get engaged in causes that they feel passionate about and where they can make a real difference. Hungary's largest and most influential LGBTQ+ NGO couldn't have found a better skilled EU lawyer in Hungary than Sam Baldwin."

Case study:

ARTHUR COX

Protecting LGBT+ Rights

ARTHUR COX (IRELAND)

In February 2024, our LGBTQ+ committee, Alliance, held a half-day workshop to set out goals and strategy for the next 18-24 months. This “Strategy Day” considered our organisational setup and our key ambitions. We resolved that, in all that we do, we would be guided by three key principles: Empower, Enable and Educate. Our manifesto in our work is to “Empower the Next,” so that our committee alliance can help guide Arthur Cox LLP to continue to be a place that empowers the next (and each and every) LGBTQ+ and ally employee, intern, supplier, client or other stakeholder that we come into contact with through our business.

Having determined our strategy, our events and initiatives then sought to align with those goals and ambitions. During 2024, Alliance sought to expand our focus to provide greater recognition and support to minority groups within the LGBTQ+ community. In our committee, we informally call this initiative “Beyond the G”. This is a nod to the position of the letter “G” in LGBTQ+, acknowledging that members of the community with other gender and/or sexual identities (such as those who identify as bisexual, trans or queer) may be in need of greater support.

As acceptance for gay and lesbian people grows, we feel it is crucial that other groups are not left behind.

That’s why we placed the trans community at the heart of our 2024 Pride celebrations. We worked with campaigner and activist Aisling Gannon SC, a parent to a young trans person, on delivering a workshop on the lived experience of Aisling and her son, Steve, during his transition. Aisling’s talk emphasised the importance of allyship and the joy and affirmation she and her son have experienced on his transitioning journey.

We also continue to work with TENI, a transgender equality non-profit, in hosting workshops to assist both those who transition in the workplace, and their allies. We both proactively and reactively support LGBTQ+ causes and interests

“Our manifesto in our work is to “Empower the Next,” so that our committee alliance can help guide Arthur Cox LLP to continue to be a place that empowers the next.”

“...we sought to advance an understanding that some of the issues faced by LGBTQ+ couples are the same as those faced by any other couple, while also contextualising the occasional challenges faced in legal practice by LGBTQ+ lawyers.”

through the firm’s wider pro bono work, including supporting in the execution of gender recognition documentation.

In addition, we were also proud to host international disputes lawyer David Herlihy. David is a senior partner at A&O Shearman. We invited David to discuss his life and career from his perspective as a gay man. David spoke eloquently and candidly about his experiences as a gay man of growing up in Ireland, as well as marriage, baby loss, adoption, and working in jurisdictions hostile to LGBTQ+ people. In inviting David, we sought to advance an understanding that some of the issues faced by LGBTQ+ couples are the same as those faced by any other couple, while also contextualising the occasional challenges faced in legal practice by LGBTQ+ lawyers around feelings of potential prejudice or unsafety, and how to deal with those.

We also hosted Irish media personality James Kavanagh for an uplifting and poignant event that addressed his life and career. James spoke candidly about his experience as an ‘out’ media personality, as well as his experiences of bullying as a young person. Other

initiatives in 2024 included a weekly newsletter recommending and highlighting LGBTQ+ culture, music, literature and art; as well as a curated community tour of The Museum of Literature Ireland attended by the firm’s staff focussing on Dublin’s LGBTQ+ literary history.

All of these initiatives have the effect of contextualising LGBTQ+ experience for those who may not have had that experience in their lives to date. This is central to building a community of support and allyship in our business. Alliance aims in all that it does not just to support but to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community. This work culminates each year with the firm’s “Pride Brunch”, a vibrant party marking Dublin Pride, hosted in the firm’s Dublin office, that all members of the firm and their families are encouraged to attend.

We have also begun to plan our programme of events for 2025, which includes an expanded “Beyond the G” programme, and a planned return to our University Round Table event in 2025, which brings together representatives from LGBTQ+ societies in all of the major



Irish universities in a forum to exchange ideas and perspectives with each other and with us.

Our greatest challenge in our work remains balancing a desire on the part of the committee to deliver the best possible programme in the demanding law-firm environment. We have addressed this through a revised committee structure, which has three sub-committee strands: Pride & Events, Health & Wellbeing, and Outreach. Committee members are encouraged to sign up to at least one subcommittee. Our committee has strongly encouraged participation by committee members in initiatives that are genuinely of interest to them, rather than appointing committee members ad hoc to “random” tasks, thereby navigating the fatigue by ensuring that committee members are enthusiastic about initiatives they work on.

We are proud of the work of Alliance in 2024. Our committee is now part of a four-pillar, centralised EDI firm strategy, encompassing our Gender committee; our Neurodiversity and Disability network; and EMBRACE, our race and ethnicity network. Alliance remains the most active and recognised Arthur Cox EDI network, and its impact is felt in both large-scale events (such as our Pride month) and in smaller ways, such as our submissions to the firm on the adequacy and suitability of health insurance group schemes to support LGBTQ+ staff.

Our impact now extends beyond the firm, and we are proud to support some of our larger clients in the growth and development of their EDI networks by looking to Alliance and its structure as a template.

Case study:

Protecting LGBT+ Rights



COBALT (BALTICS)

The situation for LGBT+ rights in the Baltics is evolving, with varying degrees of acceptance and legal advancements across the region. Estonia legalised same-sex marriage in 2022, while Latvia introduced civil partnerships for same-sex couples in 2023. Although civil partnerships do not grant the same full legal recognition as marriage, they represent an improvement in the legal protections available to LGBT+ individuals in Latvia. Lithuania has been slower to progress, but discussions about advancements are ongoing.



Overall, the Baltic states are experiencing a gradual shift towards greater acceptance and legal recognition of LGBT+ rights. While there is still room for improvement, the progress made in recent years is a positive sign for the region.

Since 2018, COBALT has been involved in various initiatives to contribute to a more diverse, inclusive and equitable legal landscape. We have been the principal law firm advocating with state institutions to recognise LGBT+ families through our pro bono work with the Association Mozaika, including conducting various litigations for the last five years.

Our Managing Partner Lauris Liepa, Partner Edgars Pastars and Senior Associate Gabriela Šantare, were part of the Working Group of the Parliament drafting amendments to eight laws to regulate partnerships in Latvia, which would protect non-married couples (including same-sex couples) in the areas of health, pensions, and taxes. They actively participated in discussing the new legislation to ensure that the legal framework recognises and protects the rights of all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender.

identity, to shape a more inclusive legal system that reflects the diversity of Latvian society.

On 9 November 2023, the Saeima (Parliament) adopted amendments to eight laws, which envisage the introduction of a partnership institution in Latvia that came into effect on 1 July 2024.

In addition to legislative changes, COBALT has represented more than ten same-sex families to achieve their recognition as a family (including parent-children relationship between the family members) and fulfilment of more advanced rights that stem from family relations. In particular, adoption of the single-family surname, receipt of parent benefits, childcare allowance, diplomatic partner allowance and tax exemption for expenses in respect to the child. Finally, COBALT is representing clients in ongoing disputes regarding recognition of marriages concluded abroad.

As legal advocates for LGBT+ individuals in Latvia, we confront two primary challenges: a lack of legal protection and a conservative political landscape.

In 2020 and 2021, our law firm achieved two landmark victories in the Latvian Constitutional Court on behalf of

“...we confront two primary challenges: a lack of legal protection and a conservative political landscape.”

same-sex couples. These cases marked a historic precedent, as the court convincingly ruled in favour of same-sex couples, declaring them and their children to be families deserving of equal state protection. As a result, the Saeima was mandated to establish regulations safeguarding the rights of same-sex families by June 2022, a task they ultimately failed to accomplish due to the prevailing conservative political climate.

A pivotal moment arrived on 9 November 2023, when the Saeima approved amendments to eight laws laying the groundwork for the establishment of a partnership institution in Latvia.

Despite this progress, it's crucial to acknowledge that Latvia's journey toward full LGBTQ+ equality remains slow and faces ongoing challenges. Lack of courage to introduce wholesome and sufficient regulation to protect all families equally still continues to pose a significant obstacle.

Through our pro bono work, our team has played a pivotal role in ensuring that same-sex families are not discriminated and receive the same legal protection as married couples in Latvia.

Here are some key achievements:

- **Expansion of Benefits for Same-Sex Partners:** Our efforts have led to the extension of spousal benefits to the same-sex partners of Latvian diplomats, demonstrating a commitment to equality and inclusivity.



- **Recognition of Parental Rights:** We have played a crucial role in securing parental rights for same-sex partners, ensuring that they are recognised as the other parent of their child for the purpose of tax allowances.
- **Access to Family Social Security Benefits:** Our advocacy has helped rainbow families access family social security benefits, providing them with essential financial support.

These victories have not only benefited individual clients but have also set important legal precedents that will continue to protect the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals in Latvia for years to come.

Our commitment to equality and justice remains unwavering, and we will continue to fight for a more inclusive and equitable society.

We are immensely proud of our partners' and personnel's (some of whom belong to the LGBTQ+ community) dedication to justice and equality. By taking on challenging cases and advocating for LGBTQ+ rights, they have made a significant impact on the lives of many. Our team members have been instrumental in driving positive societal change through their tireless work and public advocacy.

Asia-Pacific and Greater China Region Chapter

Introduction



Beatrice Chan

Asia-Pacific Research Director

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion is becoming an important focus for law firms and corporate counsel in the Asia-Pacific region. Our research for the Asia-Pacific and Greater China Region guides has shown that law firms are increasingly prioritising diversity and inclusion within their workforce. This includes not only gender balance and career opportunities for women lawyers but also cultural integration and disability inclusion. Many law firms are implementing innovative policies and joining initiatives in the wider community to support the career progression of individuals from diverse backgrounds and those with disabilities, aiming to break traditional barriers and create a more inclusive environment.

“Our research for the Asia-Pacific and Greater China Region guides has shown that law firms are increasingly prioritising diversity and inclusion within their workforce.”

The emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion by law firms mirrors the growing attention from in-house teams towards the DEI credentials of their external counsel. Clients often highlight the importance of diversity considerations when selecting outside counsel, including during panel appointments. In-house counsel notes and values the presence of a diverse team, which encompasses not only gender but also cultural diversity, disability inclusion, ethnicity, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and socio-economic background. They often draw a direct link between diversity of the team and the

quality of service and advice provided on a given and specific legal matter. This holistic approach to diversity is seen as a key factor in fostering innovation and bringing varied perspectives to legal challenges.

Many firms report their dedication and efforts in raising awareness regarding cultural integration and disabilities, through holding sessions and workshops, implementing policies and partaking in initiatives to bring about positive impact to the workplace in general. People feel supported and respected in an inclusive workplace, and it creates a sense of belonging and an environment where they can thrive and achieve their full potential.

“They often draw a direct link between diversity of the team and the quality of service and advice provided on a given and specific legal matter.”

The Chambers Asia-Pacific and Greater China Region teams are committed to promoting and ranking a diverse group of lawyers. We have taken several proactive steps in this regard, such as increasing the proportion of interviewees from diverse backgrounds. Our goal is to achieve a comprehensive representation in our interviews over the coming years. Additionally, we conduct regular training sessions with Research Analysts to identify and mitigate potential biases in the feedback they gather. We also ask that law firms share detailed diversity statistics with us annually to help us monitor and better understand the market.

Individual profile:

Cultural Integration

Russell
McVeagh

ALLISON ARTHUR-YOUNG, RUSSELL MCVEAGH

“We’re seeing a generation of young lawyers coming through who are passionate about Tikanga, and in 2025 Tikanga will become a compulsory subject paper in the LLB degree curriculum.”



There has been a noticeable growth in recognising and practising Māori culture and Māori Tikanga (law) in Aotearoa New

Zealand in recent years. This is reflected in large law firms, with most of them dedicated to engaging with the Māori community in a way that demonstrates commitment and support to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, as Tangata Tiriti (the Treaty of Waitangi, as people of the Treaty).

We’re seeing a generation of young lawyers coming through who are passionate about Tikanga, and in 2025 Tikanga will become a compulsory subject paper in the LLB degree curriculum here in New Zealand.

As one of the oldest law firms in Aotearoa New Zealand, Russell McVeagh has a proud history of being involved in some of the most significant developments in Māori Legal, including the seminal Lands case in 1987 – the first case to articulate and apply the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Today, we work with iwi (Māori tribes and people) helping them achieve their strategic and commercial goals.

In 2022, when I was Russell McVeagh Board Chair, we completed a refresh of the firm’s five-year Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Strategy, developing a significant D&I work programme and committing to three critical D&I goals – gender, ethnicity and inclusion.

As part of this strategy, we developed our Te Ao Māori (Māori culture and language) plan, embedding Tikanga and growing our cultural competency across the firm so we can better reflect, engage, partner

and communicate with Māori businesses, clients, communities, and our people.

This included offering Te Reo Māori language lessons and cultural competency workshops to all our staff, and Te Reo Māori Court procedures training to our legal staff. We celebrate cultural events in the office such as Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori (Māori Language Week), Matariki (Māori New Year) and we support Te Hunga Rōia Māori o Aotearoa (Māori Law Society)'s annual Hui-ā-Tau (conference).

We have also strengthened our relationship with TupuToa, an organisation committed to growing Māori and Pacific leaders, by increasing the firm's commitment for interns and providing opportunities for them to learn and develop.

The workplan that sits behind our D&I strategy is key to closing our pay gap. We were one of the first law firms in New Zealand to report our pay gaps, and by committing to do so annually we are taking important steps to closing these.

We also need to ensure we maintain focus of representation in all levels across the firm, including fairness and consistency at hiring stages, and policies and practices which encourage greater ethnic equality.

Finally, it is critical we continue to work with universities and more broadly with communities to encourage Māori and Pacific young people to consider a career in law, and, more particularly, a career in corporate law.

For me, the most important and valuable impact has been in making our people

“...the most important and valuable impact has been in making our people feel supported and included, so they can bring their real selves to work.”

feel supported and included, so they can bring their real selves to work. Our most recent Pulse survey showed that 86% of our people feel they belong and can thrive at the firm, 92% feel included by the people they work with, and 91% believe the firm is a great place to work.

I'm also proud that our work in this space has had a positive impact on our clients and our communities. Part of our Pro Bono Framework is increasing access to justice for iwi, hapū (sub-tribes) and other Māori-led organisations and working for their collective well-being. We have recently advised on a huge project for an iwi housing initiative in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland and we partner with organisations like Tupu Toa to make a real difference to our communities.

Taking the firm forward culturally and building a positive, welcoming, and inclusive environment is something we are all so proud of at the firm, and which has been made possible due to the variety of robust internal and external measures that have been established. We set out to ensure everyone felt supported and could thrive at the firm, and it's been heartwarming seeing our staff engagement survey results regarding inclusivity show this has been made a reality.

Case study:

Cultural Integration



CHANDHIOK & MAHAJAN (INDIA)

Chandhiok & Mahajan (C&M) operates across four locations, three of which are respectively led by female partners. Diverse leadership not only brings different perspectives to the table but also fosters a more innovative and collaborative work environment.

Our firm consists of attorneys and support staff from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, bringing a mix of values, work ethics, and communication styles. Shafaq Uraziee Sapre, the Managing Partner of the Mumbai region, is a woman who belongs to a religious minority (Muslim), and Karan Singh Chandhiok, Partner and Head of Competition and Regulatory Practice, also belongs to a religious minority (Sikh). Our partners actively promote an inclusive environment where all voices are heard and respected.

“We take pride in cultivating a culture that actively supports equality and diversity while recognising skill and merit.”

Additionally, we also have other attorneys and staff members who belong to various religious minorities, namely, Muslim, Sikh and Christian. Our firm’s value system clearly addresses that discrimination and bias based on religion and culture, and any form of prejudice or bias is not tolerated.

The ethos of C&M is reflected in our cultural commitments, and the firm participates in all religious festivals. The firm observes holidays for festivals like Eid, Diwali, Christmas, Ganesh Chaturthi, Sankranthi and many more, and the entire firm also gets together to participate in festivities and decorate the office with traditional items like rangolis, lights and flowers. We take pride in cultivating a culture that actively supports equality and diversity while recognising skill and merit.

The firm regularly organises team-building activities and group outings to encourage interaction among attorneys and staff from different backgrounds. We take pride in the fact that more than 50% of our workforce comprise of women and several key individuals in the firm hail from diverse religious backgrounds.



Understanding our employees' varied religious and cultural customs was one of the biggest obstacles. Hence, we implemented a holiday calendar which is a true reflection of the diverse spirit of the firm. Our firm does not have a fixed holiday calendar; while we offer major public and religious holidays, we also recognise the diverse culture of India by providing local holidays for attorneys and staff in specific geographies. Attorneys and support staff are often encouraged to take leave for other religious and cultural holidays.

Additionally, the firm allows attorneys and staff to take time off or adjust their work hours on any day of the week, especially on Fridays, to attend prayers (Namaz) or engage in other religious or cultural observances. We encourage open discussions between attorneys, staff, and management regarding individual needs for accommodations, ensuring that everyone feels comfortable requesting time for their observances. Our firm policy emphasises open communication and team members are free to ask for time off for cultural or personal reasons.

With attorneys and employees of the firm being from a variety of cultural backgrounds, it might get challenging sometimes to accommodate the holidays without disrupting workflow. Further,

observing multiple festivals can strain resources and affect productivity, especially during major case and project deadlines and client meeting. However, our firm has been successfully addressing these hurdles thoughtfully and has adopted a balanced approach. All attorneys and staff are made aware and are encouraged to step in and assist any member of the firm, in the event such member requires some time off. This ensures that everyone's sentiments are well respected and considered and work doesn't get affected either.

A diverse environment has a positive impact on our firm. The attorneys and the staff feel respected and accommodated, which contributes to a supportive workplace. This also ensures general well-being, reduces stress and makes everyone more engaged, productive and increases loyalty. Our team thrives on its diversity, which enhances communication and collaboration. This positively influences both our employees and the overall workplace culture, enhancing employee satisfaction and improving retention rates while fostering stronger team dynamics. Further, our firm's diverse and inclusive environment also resonates better with a diverse client base. C&M is proud of the inclusive culture it has cultivated and remains committed to further enhancing it.

Case study:

Disability Inclusion and Innovation



JOHNSON STOKES & MASTER (HONG KONG)

According to the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 43,900 of individuals living with disabilities had completed college education in 2013, but only 35% were employed – just half of the 70% employment rate of the overall population with such qualifications. CareER, a Hong Kong non-profit organisation that supports people with disabilities in employment and one of our partnering non-profits, also found that only 59% of their respondents had employment, among 206 higher-educated youths with disabilities. Furthermore, some of them were only employed in a position with lower educational requirements.

Our aim in working on disability inclusion is to be impactful in widening access and inclusion for people with disabilities working in the legal industry. Johnson Stokes & Master Hong Kong office participated in CareER Inclusive Recruitment Fair in October 2023, which helped promote job openings to college-educated people with disabilities and Special Educational Needs in Hong Kong. We also worked with CareER and delivered two sessions of lunch and learns on disability etiquette for our

colleagues in Asia, with the aim to raise awareness regarding disability inclusion and accessibility among our colleagues.

The Firm's Hong Kong office further organised with one of our banking clients a six-week summer internship scheme during July and August 2023, where the interns spent three weeks of internship at Johnson Stokes & Master, and three weeks at our client's office. We partnered with OJ Ability, the non-profit arm of Oliver James, which they helped us identify candidates for our two internship opportunities, one in legal and the other in business service, for students living with disabilities.

In 2024, we went into a deeper understanding of the deaf and hard of hearing community in Hong Kong, in the view that people who are deaf and hard of hearing have encountered barriers in Hong Kong at different stages of the legal process due to misunderstanding and miscommunication. As part of the legal ecosystem in Hong Kong, more awareness on this particular topic is needed.

The Hong Kong office hosted the Silence Workshop with local non-profit Dialogue Experience, which provided

an opportunity for participants to experience a series of activities in the absence of sound and speech. These activities helped provide a deeper insight into the daily lives of people with hearing impairments. The Hong Kong office also commemorated the International Day of Sign Languages on 23 September and organised two well-attended sign language workshops for our colleagues to learn the fundamentals of Hong Kong Sign Language and gain insights into the practical application of sign languages in everyday life with local non-profit SLCO Community Resources. Going forward, we hope to engage with sign language interpreters and offer interpretation at some of our major events.

One of the challenges in our pursuit of disability inclusion is the lack of awareness in the workplace. We addressed this by holding education sessions with local non-profits such as SENsational Foundation, engaging with the community and joining initiatives such as the #PositivelyPurple global movement. This initiative celebrates and draws attention to the economic contribution of approximately 386 million disabled employees around the world and uses the colour purple, which is symbolic of disability, to drive the momentum for disability inclusion. It provides the opportunity for employers, disabled employees and allies to come together to jointly celebrate “purple talent” and to highlight to the world the

“It provides the opportunity for employers, disabled employees and allies to come together to jointly celebrate “purple talent” and to highlight to the world the importance of disability inclusion across all sectors and industries.”

importance of disability inclusion across all sectors and industries.

As an example of the impact of our work, the following is a quote from one of the internship participants on the impact of that experience:

“Overall, the experience at Johnson Stokes & Master was excellent and wonderful. All the colleagues were very nice and willing to teach. The manager was also very caring, ensuring that the workload was reasonable.... In general, it provided me with a great opportunity to understand how the finance department in a law firm operates, and it was a valuable exposure in my career.”

In 2023, CareER awarded our Hong Kong office the Inclusive Employer Badge to honour our continuous commitment as an inclusive employer. The recognition aims to encourage businesses to hire people with disabilities in Hong Kong.

Closing Remarks



Luke Vincett
DEI Manager

As I began identifying the themes for this Report, poring through hundreds of submissions for the Chambers DEI Awards, it was striking that firms of all sizes, all over the world, had incredibly well-run DEI and pro bono programmes. The life of a lawyer is notoriously busy and time-sensitive – every minute is accounted for. The level of commitment to DEI and pro bono, therefore, is truly remarkable.

Many firms had programmes that had been running for years and were being fine-tuned over time, exemplified by the case studies included in the Next Level Mentoring section of the USA chapter and Enhanced Parental Leave Policies in the Global chapter. At the same time, many firms, and many of the same firms, were introducing a range of completely new initiatives, addressing topics that had not previously been covered, such as social mobility in Latin America and disability inclusion in Asia Pacific and Greater China.

“Access to justice for all has evolved into access to a legal career for all and a recognition that law firms should be representative of the clients and wider society they serve – indeed, being representative makes them better, more successful firms.”

Law firms have, largely, always had a sense of social responsibility and lawyers have been key players in driving forward progressive legislation, such as *Brown v Board of*

Education. Similarly, pro bono work has enabled access to justice for those who need it most. The level of commitment to pro bono work, historically led by firms in the USA, has ramped up significantly around the world in recent years. Latin America, in particular, has taken the US model and run with it, with firms committing an impressive number of hours to unpaid legal work and taking on an increasingly varied range of cases which are managed within an enhanced structure.

“... success in DEI enables firms to attract and retain top talent, meet the needs of their clients and attract new clients more effectively, manage risks and create workplaces where anyone, regardless of their background, can thrive and deliver for the firm.”

The development of DEI, now almost universal across the global legal industry, has provided a framework for firms to turn this sense of social responsibility inwards. Access to justice for all has evolved into access to a legal career for all and a recognition that law firms should be representative of the clients and wider society they serve – indeed, being representative makes them better, more successful firms.

Firms everywhere are committing more time and resources than ever to achieving this aim. In the US, initiatives focusing on Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) justice and affinity have proliferated at an incredible rate since Covid-19; in Europe firms have implemented sophisticated systems for preventing gender-based violence and harassment; and in Brazil initiatives to recruit and advance Black and Afro-Brazilian lawyers, almost non-existent ten years ago despite being the majority of the population, are ubiquitous.

In an increasingly divided and divisive world, law firms are continuing to prioritise DEI and its indisputable business benefits. As countless reports show, success in DEI enables firms to attract and retain top talent, meet the needs of their clients and attract new clients more effectively, manage risks and create workplaces where anyone, regardless of their background, can thrive and deliver for the firm.

The firms included in this report are incredibly varied in terms of size, structure and focus. Some are global behemoths with huge resources to invest and others are boutiques with niche practices and tiny teams of non-legal staff. All of them, however, have a shared commitment to leveraging their place in the market to do good. The legal profession is uniquely placed to drive progress in society, working with governments, private individuals, NGOs and businesses of all sizes.

“The legal profession is uniquely placed to drive progress in society, working with governments, private individuals, NGOs and businesses of all sizes.”

The case studies in this Report and the initiatives submitted for the Chambers DEI Awards over the last 13 years are incredible examples of what can be achieved in even the most difficult circumstances, through geopolitical upheaval, wars, natural disasters and fractious societal discourse. The Chambers DEI team look forward to continuing to recognise, award and report on these successes and collaborating with the legal profession to continue to advance positive action.



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