



**Abogacía
Española**
CONSEJO GENERAL

49th EUROPEAN PRESIDENTS CONFERENCE

COUNTRY REPORT

CONTEXT

The Consejo General de la Abogacía Española (Spanish National Bar) is formed by the 83 Spanish local Bars. It represents more than 150.000 lawyers.

2020 has been a different year where reinvention and support to our colleagues have been the main goals of the institution. The pandemic must become a challenge and an opportunity to reinforce and spread rule of law and democracy all over the world. Only based on rule of law and collective we can build an equal and wealth society. Lawyers we have an immense responsibility to aware and guarantee both.

UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The engagement of the Consejo to the UN Sustainable Development Goals marked the activities of the institution during 2020 and inspires the strategy for the following years. One of the main objectives is to scale up these goals to all lawyers and law firms in Spain, tackling them together. We consider the SDG crucial to guarantee the rule of law and to enhance democracy in our country and abroad.

Along 2020, the right to health has been the issue of the year. The Consejo is raising awareness on the importance of laws and behaviour to assure everybody the access to health and to the sanitary system. Our annual congress on Human Rights on December was the crowning moment of different activities and events celebrated during this year on the right to Health.

EQUITY & DIVERSITY

Gender Equality is a priority for the Consejo. The approval of Equity and Gender Equality Plan and the creation of the commission of Equity and Gender Equality ensure the progress of their objectives and allow adapting measures and actions to situations. Equity approach must be adopted in every action of law as a tool to encourage a social change. Identifying and removing prejudices and clichés is mandatory to avoid any kind of discrimination.

Equity in diversity reinforced a society. Rule of law and democracy are not full if there is not equity. Women are vital to tackle this crisis and the main pillar of a wealth and democratic society.

LEGAL AID AND RULE OF LAW

Access to legal aid for people who can least afford has being since the dawn of history one of the main aims of the Consejo and Spanish Bars. This social commitment rises ensuring the right of universal Justice. Socio-economic inequities cannot become an unequal Access to courts. Free Legal Aid has been always given by the Spanish Bars without any consideration but the commitment with society. Today, we all recognise the high value of corporate social responsibility, but Spanish Bars have been socially responsible for centuries as public Law corporations and they have developed one of the most efficient public policies with the higher standards of quality of the administration with symbolic costs to the Treasury.

Thousands of Law professionals organised and well trained by the Spanish Bars, practises the legal aid scheme in Spain. This fact guarantees free justice and legal protection for every citizen.

One of our main goals during 2020 has been guarantying the legal aid system before the Ministry of Justice, establishing an agile and efficient process of payment.

Besides, the Consejo has experience and collaborates in several projects to improve access to justice and to reinforce legal institutions with the Ministry of Justice, the Spanish Agency for development and cooperation and other European institutions and Bars. In concrete, we are now working in the establishment of a new legal aid system in Jordan. The added value of the Spanish cooperation is based on the solid institutional experience in the provision of free legal aid by the Spanish legal profession. The object of the contract is the provision of technical support services (TSS). The project has two main objectives:

- Development of legal aid to facilitate access to justice for vulnerable people, and
- Increasing citizens' legal awareness of their rights under the Act

On the other hand, we worked with the Observatory of Lawyers in Danger in coordination with other important lawyers' institutions in Europe and abroad to protect the right of defence and reinforce the rule of law. We have been actively involved in monitoring the process in Turkey of our colleagues imprisoned for defending democracy and human rights. We also began supporting lawyers fighting against ecoterrorism in Peru and assuring the right of defence for defendants in several cases in Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Honduras.

Furthermore, The Consejo began to collaborate with our Consulates giving support to Spanish prisoners abroad and launching a campaign to aware against international crimes and giving protection to Spaniards abroad victims of domestic violence.

Finally, we continue working on the establishment of our Legal Aid Switchboard in all Spain, designed to tackle two main challenges, transparency and legal certainty. To protect the rule of law and fundamental rights is mandatory an independent an equal justice for all the citizens. The guaranteed instrument is a system of legal aid that must be trustable, agile, solid and transparent, opened to society and lawyers. This instrument allows to follow and monitor all the process and coordinating all the stakeholders participating in legal aid assistance. This System provides the technical means to

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DEONTOLOGY

The Consejo has approved during 2019 a new code of Deontology. This code is adapted to the new technological reality, gives stronger protection for clients and reinforces the duty of professional secret. All following the changes introduces by European regulation. Now, we are working with our government fostering mediation and guaranteeing the best practices of lawyers and legal professionals on mediation.

INTERNATIONALISATION

The priority of the Consejo is to get closer to its European partners, fostering better coordination and cooperation. To achieve this objective we also facilitate our lawyers knowledge and networking abroad Spain. We are also boosting Spain as a centre of International arbitration and encouraging our experts to work in other places. In 2020 we have worked in several seminars and courses to prepare lawyers in a globalised world, opening their horizons and share our values on rule of law and democracy.

CONCLUSION

In guise of conclusion, the pandemic must become a challenge and an opportunity to reinforce and spread rule of law and democracy all over the world. Only based on rule of law and collective we can build an equal and wealth society. Lawyers we have an immense responsibility to aware and guarantee both. 2020 was the beginning of a path that we must walk in 2021 creating a better world with better persons.