



LUCÍA
GONZÁLEZ,
ONTIER'S
ENERGY
PARTNER:
"ALWAYS
KEEP IN MIND
WHERE YOU
COME FROM"

Lucía González, recently appointed as a partner in the Energy practice at ONTIER, talks with Legal Dealmaker. Originally from Galicia, she bet on the Energy sector from the very beginning. Lucía started from what many consider as “the summit” within the legal space; as an in-house lawyer. Later, she jumped to the law firm sector and -until this last month- she has been a senior associate and head of the ONTIER's Energy practice. Recognised by this media as one of the Top Energy Lawyers in Spain, her story is a diverse and amazing one.



“The two best decisions of my career were coming to Madrid to complement my bachelor’s degree with an LLM in Corporate legal advice at IE [...] (and) specialising in the energy sector, first as an in-house and later in a law firm”

Born in Galicia, a woman, a lawyer, an in-house counsel, a senior associate (responsible for the Energy area), and now a partner at an international firm like ONTIER, and at such a young age. As we mentally and imaginatively go through her career, we can perceive a chain of wise decisions. Which ones would you consider to be the most crucial ones that have enabled you to reach your current situation and why? Mandatory question: How have you managed to balance your professional and personal life?

I wish I was as young as you say....

Without a doubt, the two best decisions of my career were, on the one hand, coming to Madrid to complement my bachelor’s degree with an LLM in Corporate legal advice at IE, where I was able to acknowledge the wide range of opportunities I had with the studies I had taken. On the other hand, specialising in the Energy sector, first as part of the in-house legal department

of Cobra (ACS Group) and then in a law firm. My stay at Cobra gave me a business and multidisciplinary vision of the sector, which was very important and had a perfect fit with the legal part. I must confess that when I faced the opportunity to specialise in transactional energy advice at the firm, I saw it as a challenge but also as an opportunity, and today I am very grateful for it and if I could choose, I would do the same thing over again.

In terms of work-life balance, I do a lot of juggling (like any parent) to be able to be close to my family on a daily basis and at special moments. It helps a lot that my husband is also a lawyer, he understands me perfectly and helps as much as he can (although I admit that I have changed more diapers than he has....)

Even though it is true that this is a sector in full development, Energy Law in the Spanish private practice is, or seems to be, a male-led industry, though there are significant and recognized exceptions. What are the particularities of this practice that have made it partially, up until now, “a men’s territory”? In this regard, what is your opinion on the evolution of the role of women in this field of Law?

In the Energy sector, as in other sectors where the technical/engineering part is very relevant, there is a high percentage of male professionals. In legal consultancies I would say that there is a higher female presence and as far as law

firms are concerned, perhaps the majority of the most senior lawyers are men, but the presence of women in renewable energies is becoming more and more notorious; in fact, in our transactional department, there is only one man.

You have also studied communications. From your point of view, to what extent is the development of these skills important to becoming a top dealmaker in the legal world?

Lawyers need to be able to explain complex legal issues in a clear, concise, and comprehensive manner to our clients, who are often not experts in some legal technical aspects of the matter in question. Clients increasingly demand more precise and practical answers applied to their business or operation instead of lengthy reports that analyze the question at hand, without providing any conclusive answers. This requires lawyers to be very good communicators as well as excellent technicians.



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Recently recognised by this media as one of the Top Lawyers of the Energy sector in the Spanish legal profession within the private practice, during the gala, you were in charge of opening the section for the recognition of in-house lawyers. Taking into account that areas such as Compliance and Ethics are becoming increasingly relevant for the successful closing of projects, both at the national and European levels, do you believe that energy and renewable business are striving for transparency and are recognising the work of their in-house lawyers?

Indeed. In-house lawyers have been becoming more relevant in terms of their presence in the company's decision-making bodies, especially those that are able to combine their legal knowledge with a general sense of business and sectorial market understanding. The entry of new players in the sector and the importance of projects and development of the sector foster sophistication and transparency for companies.

Despite joining ONTIER as part of the Corporate, Mergers, and Acquisitions team, you are able to deal with Contract Law matters and have experience in other areas of Law, such as Real Estate. Although you are part of a transversal and multidisciplinary team, what specificities of Law practice do you think are key to becoming a top Energy lawyer?

The Energy sector, like any other, is transversal and in

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order to be able to give full and comprehensive legal advice to the client, it is essential to know, beyond the purely contractual aspects, the regulatory component (which generally generates aversion to Corporate lawyers), Real Estate, Urban Planning, Financial and Taxation of the sector. The client is increasingly looking for a lawyer who, despite not being an expert in all subjects, is still able to have knowledge on all areas of the Law that affect its business in order to optimally focus the advice from the very beginning and at the same time support and coordinate the other specialists who must participate in the counselling.

We have heard from people within the industry that to be a good lawyer in the Energy practice, you sometimes have to act like an engineer, and count on technical knowledge to provide advice on deals. How do lawyers acquire the necessary technical expertise to efficiently provide advice and what should the scope of such knowledge be?

To my mind, it is fundamental. Knowledge in these subjects is acquired through practice and

study. In my case, my time in an engineering company helped me a lot in this part of my training. In addition, at ONTIER, we have an engineer on staff who helped us with everything related to the technical side. We currently have an agreement with an engineering and electricity market company to help us know and understand the technical part and how it can affect the regulatory, financial or contractual side. This is essential for us. In addition, whenever we have the opportunity, we try to visit projects “in situ” and have meetings with the technicians, which brings us very close to the project and the client.

The Energy practice is undeniably linked to Public and Regulatory Law. How is the interaction with Regulatory teams to successfully close an Energy deal?

The Energy practice has a strong regulatory component and the advice of the Public Law team is fundamental. It is very important that the Regulatory team is flexible and pro deal, and that it is also close to the business even though its practice is more rigid than the transactional one. At

ONTIER, the work is coordinated from the transactional area but we always work hand to hand.

As a result of the “Top Energy” awards, we had the opportunity to learn more about associations such as AEDEN and EFELA, through its president Vicente López-Ibor Mayor, who received the Honorary Award. What do you think about cooperation with associations - in general- and, specifically, within the field of Energy Law?

I am very much in favour of the associations within the sector and I think they are doing very important work and adding significant value.

Associations such as UNEF, which we know very well, have been and are very close to the companies and their business, promoting the interests of the sector and helping to ensure that new legislation is adapted to the needs, technical progress, and reality of the sector.

Summarise in one sentence your philosophy of life.

Always keep in mind where we come from and where/what are we trying to reach; along the way find the balance between personal and professional life, enjoy life, and help others. Everything has its reward.

Well Summarised in more than just one sentence...

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“Jaime de la Serna, general counsel at X-ELIO, with Lucía González, ONTIER's partner, during Legal Dealmaker's Top Energy Lawyers event”

