

PORTUGUESE LAW FIRMS

VdA

Matilde Horta e Costa, VdA Corporate Affairs & Talent director, explains to us that when hiring graduates for their Trainee Program they consider the Law schools they graduated from and final GPA, languages that they are fluent in and also professional and academic background. "If they pass the first stage and move on to the interview stage, we also explore their values as people and citizens, what their ambitions and future plans are, and look at their creativity, since innovation is one of the firms' core values. When recruiting a lawyer, we must also take their professional experience, expertise and reputation into consideration, specifically in the practice that we are hiring for," she says.

VdA affirms that they recruit graduates from the most prestigious Law schools in Portugal. About the academic background, VdA's head of Talent confirms us that being fluent in English and Portuguese is a basic qualifier. "But in these global times, speaking more than two languages or a specific language besides English and Portuguese may be a key factor. With a strong international footprint, being present in 13 jurisdictions, the firm accounts for 30 distinct nationalities and over 15 languages spoken, including German, French, Mandarin and Russian. In certain practices, and when such qualification adds value to the team, we integrate lawyers with other degrees, such as Pharmacy, Economics, Management and Data Science." At VdA, they state that the recruitment process is unbiased, "our recruitment processes and the way they are conducted are based on the promotion of equal opportunities for all candidates, regardless of their ethnic background, country of origin, gender or sexual/religious orientation, and on the merit and skills of each person."

"INNOVATION IS ONE OF THE FIRMS' CORE VALUES. WHEN RECRUITING A LAWYER, WE MUST ALSO TAKE THEIR PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE, EXPERTISE AND REPUTATION INTO CONSIDERATION, SPECIFICALLY IN THE PRACTICE THAT WE ARE HIRING FOR"

MATILDE HORTA E COSTA | VdA



VdA recognises the importance of soft skills to succeed in a demanding working environment. "Soft Skills such as teamwork, emotional intelligence, trust, drive and initiative are pivotal to our culture and the way in which we interact with our clients and stakeholders," they say. "Since hard skills can translate into technical knowledge, VdA continually monitors the legal environment, and the evolution of legal services,

in order to adapt to the constant dynamic changes that characterise the legal profession. On top of more disruptive skills, including project management, business intelligence and Artificial Intelligence management, VdA values the traditional hard skills, including a solid knowledge of the Law, research, effective written and oral communication and analytical skills.”

The average retention rate in this firm is 85%. “The role of VdA in the development and training of new generations of lawyers is a mission that we always considered paramount, and which is based on relevant aspects of our culture and values. Close monitoring of trainees at VdA reflects this vision, an aspect that has contributed to being a recognised 'school' over the years, a distinctive factor that we are very proud of. But we wanted to go further. We, therefore, created the Trainee's Office recently, a nucleus that will actively monitor the entire path of the VdA trainee, through a program focused on the specificities of this professional phase, for the purpose of enhancing a unique experience and representing an integrated, innovative and specialised response to their related matters.”

MORAIS LEITÃO

“When hiring new lawyers for the firm, broadly speaking, Morais Leitão is very concerned about diversity and in favouring people with different backgrounds. Other than that, we are proud to uphold that we do not have a Morais Leitão specific type or profile. To be quite frank, we search for decent people, people with principles, and obviously with a high level of technical expertise and some basic soft skills that will enable them to have a successful career. Apart from that, the more diverse their background, the better. Creativity and the ability to think freely have always been a major asset for lawyers. Embracing different perspectives through diversity is, therefore, a huge advantage to our work, to our knowledge of the particular cultures in which we operate, and we actively promote it in the recruitment,” explains to us **Martim Krupenski**, Operations, HR & Training director at Morais Leitão.

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MARTIM KRUPENSKI | MORAIS LEITÃO



“There are of course universities that give us more confidence than others, and we obviously tend to hire only from the five or six universities that we consider provide the

best theoretical and practical basis to our future colleagues,” Krupenski says. “We do have a lot of initiatives and protocols with those universities. However, none of them implicates a guarantee to hire any of their students. They must apply and pass through our selection procedure as any candidate.”

They express that they do not actively seek for profiles with other degrees. “However, — Krupenski highlights— depending on the candidate’s area of expertise, additional education is, of course, a huge advantage in their CV. A future Corporate lawyer with an Economics degree or an MBA will certainly have a curricular advantage. Regarding languages, English is absolutely mandatory; we simply do not hire anyone without a minimum standard of English. We also can favour, depending on our needs, a certain number of candidates speaking Chinese, French, German, Spanish, etc., as these are languages that we come across on a daily basis in our business, and usually, language knowledge comes with local and cultural knowledge.”

Krupenski continues pointing out that “we do not discriminate against gender, age or race, ensuring that all people benefit from the same opportunities. As a consequence, we do have a gender parity (well, actually, on average we have more women than men, as there are more women with a Law degree, but we have a very good balance). With regard to hard skills, we are very demanding, as we only want to have great lawyers, and no one can be a great lawyer without a very solid academic background. Soft skills represent a different matter. Of course, they are very important for the job (or for almost any job). However, as mentioned above, we manage to find decent people, people with principles, a high level of technical expertise and some basic soft skills, they certainly can be trained to be great lawyers. Some may be more extrovert and possible like more court/client exposure, while others may be introvert and like office work; that’s fine, that’s also a part of the diversity we are aiming for.”

They recognise that their selection process is very demanding. “The candidates pass through a set of tests and a battery of interviews with HR and partners. This would always be essential, but at Morais Leitão is of paramount importance as we only hire the number of trainees that we expect to invite as associates at the end their traineeship, as long, of course, they prove to have the value and the principles to become associates, i.e., we do not have overbooking of trainees. We have actually been very successful with this policy so far and normally end up inviting well above 80% of the trainees to become associates. As we see our trainees as future colleagues, we invest a lot in their training, especially in hard skills (soft skills may come later). We organise a lot of internal legal sessions, we do on the job training, we encourage them to complete their studies with Master’s degrees, post-graduations, etc.,” he concludes.

PLMJ

About the universities that give them more confidence, PLMJ highlights Católica, Nova (Universidade Nova de Lisboa), Classica (Universidade de Lisboa) and Coimbra. Regarding the studies they prefer, apart from Law, the new talents have, they express that “we don’t look only for the best students but the best people, so we are looking for all-rounded professionals. We think that other courses and prior professional experiences bring a lot of value. We managed to attract a varied background, and some examples included a trainee with a PhD in Biomedical Sciences, another that had a military career before joining us, and several were athletes. For languages, English is the minimum, but other languages are a plus. A lot of the work we do is done in the clients’ native language. German, Italian, French,

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BRUNO FERREIRA | PLMJ



Spanish and Chinese are some of the languages we work most with, and we have either native or fluent speakers in all of them."

They also care for gender equality when hiring new people. "We aim for 50%, and we managed to achieve it with the current intake as well as last year's." About the soft/hard skills that are the most relevant for them, they select the following: excellent communicators, creative and problem solver, teamwork, empathy and the ability to create relationships, and responsibility.

Previous national and international experience is very important for them. "As our clients are increasingly more international, our lawyers must be fluent not just in languages but also in culture. Candidates that have studied or done volunteer work abroad have an advantage." They have a retention rate higher than 90% after the lawyers finish their internship and—as they state—"all the trainees that receive an offer to stay, accept it."

They point out that "onboarding, training and support during the whole traineeship are undoubtedly our strongest point. The onboarding takes a full two-weeks where trainees have over 35 sessions covering our systems, the firm's history, sustainability, networking as well as self-knowledge opportunity with a day-long session around the MBTI personality test. Once the induction is done, the trainees have access to our pool of training that includes several legal-specific trainings as well as:

- Mindfulness
- Math of lawyers
- Presentation techniques
- Action behaviours (communication for lawyers)
- Productivity and resilience
- LinkedIn
- How to write for the media
- Pitching yourself and PLMJ
- Cybersecurity
- How to receive feedback
- Burnout prevention
- Accounting"

Bruno Ferreira, PLMJ co-managing partner, states that: "At PLMJ, we are not recruiting trainees, we're recruiting the next generation of partners. This means we are selecting the best people on top of the best academic track record, and we are doing that supported on

a set of core values and standards that contribute to the culture we want to define: talent, innovation, diversity and the best human beings. When we are recruiting, we are looking into the next 20 years, and this means investing in our lawyers' careers and personal development: we offer an extensive and comprehensive training program that include both hard and soft skills throughout their career, and we believe in exposing lawyers, since early years, to interesting and complex client matters."

Ferreira continues saying that "in 2019, we set out to strategically think our future and implemented Project Talent, built with a leading global consulting firm. We knew then as we do now, that our sustainable growth and success factor lies in our people and talent and our ability to attract and keep it. In a world where competition for talent is at its highest level, we want to lead the game. This vision was translated into policies that influence all aspects of the firm, from recruitment to career development and compensation. In the end, what we want for the people we choose to work at PLMJ –both lawyers and staff– is that they feel part of the same project and own it from day one."

ABREU ADVOGADOS

Alexandra Courela, Abreu Advogados' partner and head of Recruitment and Training Committee, explains that they look for people with a chronic sense of curiosity. "Innovators by definition. People who pay attention to new markets and new mentalities. We are looking for those who ask why. Those who are concerned with sustainability, human rights, diversity and our tomorrow. Those with digital skills besides a great Law curriculum, students who were able to combine legal studies with other activities. Those who are not concerned with formalities. We are looking for people who are searching for a place where they can make a difference. In addition to knowledge of the Law, having a mindset of being open to the world, of adapting to any problem and of taking responsible and sustainable decisions is a key part of the Abreu culture and is what we look for in our trainees."

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ALEXANDRA COURELA | ABREU ADVOGADOS



They welcome students from Universidade Católica (Lisbon) to conduct Legal Clinics at the Lisbon office and a Job Shadowing Programme. They also receive students from Universidade Católica (Porto) to carry out curricular internships at the Porto office and from the Universidade Nova Lisbon from the Master's degree in Forensic and Arbitration to perform curricular internship. "For the Abreu Summer Internship programme, we received students from various Law schools through the application process." Besides, Abreu has taken part in the main talent fairs for the Portuguese Law schools: FDUL, Nova, Católica - Lisbon and Porto, Coimbra, FDUP. They recognise excellence in teaching from Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Universidade Católica, Universidade de Lisboa (Clássica), Universidade do Porto, Universidade do Minho and IE. They receive an average of about 20 interns per year, combining the trainee program and short internships and, on average in the last four years, about 63% of the trainees were women. "More than 85% of trainees stay in the firm after the internship period," Courela says. "The first weeks of the new Abreu interns are dedicated to a welcoming program whose objective is not only to provide them with transversal knowledge about our organisation but also to provide them with technical knowledge considered essential for the beginning of the internship, as well as promoting the development of relevant soft skills. In addition to training, the onboarding plan is designed to foster team spirit within the group of new interns and install Abreu's spirit and culture from day one."

At Abreu the internship plan allows the training of each trainee to be progressively oriented towards a specific area of Law, which is of interest to him and which is also of interest to the firm, and which also allows for the future integration of the trainee as an associate. The Internship manager is a figure that assumes great importance during this period, since it closely follows the path of each intern, participates in their periodic evaluations, and contributes to the completion of development and improvement plans. The Internship manager monitors the work of the interns daily, has weekly/fortnightly meetings, and is the mentor of Abreu's interns. There is also a concern to support and prepare for the Bar exam. "We understand that this personalised accompaniment is one of the advantages of the internship at Abreu because it fosters individual technical and human growth." The firm also counts with a training plan designed specifically for interns and which allows them to develop the behavioural, technical and organisational skills that are expected from them and which will be assessed throughout the internship. ■

Ratio of trainees' incorporation to the firm after their internship

SPAIN

FIRM	RETENTION RATE
Garrigues	*
Cuatrecasas	80%
Uría Menéndez	100%
Deloitte Legal	100%
Baker McKenzie	*
Clifford Chance	100%
Pérez-Llorca	100%
DLA Piper	62,5%
CMS	55%
Ramón y Cajal	45-50%
Dentons	100%
Ceca Magán	85%

*no data provided by the law firm

PORTUGAL

LAW FIRM	RETENTION RATE
VdA	85%
Morais Leitão	80%
PLMJ	90%
Abreu	85%