



PRESENTATION OF DIPLOMAS TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE ICAM CORTINA FOUNDATION'S WELLBEING PROGRAMME FOR LAW FIRMS

Committed to wellbeing

ICAM recognises fourteen law firms for their work in the Bienestar Integral, the well-being program. Among them Uría Menéndez, Pérez-Llorca, Ecija, Ceca Magán, and Lener, who share their experiences with *Iberian Lawyer*

by ilaria iaquinta

In a ceremony presided over by **Eugenio Ribón**, Dean of the Madrid Bar Association (ICAM) and President of the ICAM Cortina Foundation, fourteen law firms were honoured for their commitment to the emotional health of their professionals. This ceremony, held last June, marked the conclusion of the first edition of the 'Wellbeing for law firms' programme, an initiative by the ICAM Foundation aimed at enhancing wellbeing in the legal sector.

The wellbeing programme for law firms

Over seven months, HR managers and executives from these law firms participated in an intensive in-person programme that addressed crucial topics such as the neuroscience of happiness, addiction and suicide prevention, mindfulness, and the development of action plans. The initiative also promoted the creation of personalised wellbeing programmes and conscious leadership.

Eugenio Ribón underscores the programme's importance to *Iberian Lawyer*: "Our profession and the way it is practiced by most professionals make it a complex and high-risk profession from a wellbeing perspective: consistently high stress levels, non-negotiable deadlines, dependency on acquiring new clients, a profession often practiced in isolation in our daily work... ICAM could not



ASIER ARRIAGA

THE FOURTEEN LAW FIRMS RECOGNISED

- Uría Menéndez
- Pérez-Llorca
- Clifford Chance
- Ashurst
- Eversheds Sutherland
- Ecija
- Ceca Magán
- Lener
- Cadema Asesores
- Costero Caballero Abogados
- De Pedraza Abogados
- Estudio Jurídico Eugenio & Orbaneja
- Lawell Legal Services
- Silgar Abogados

turn a blind eye to this reality. I have always argued that building a supportive ICAM, one that is there for each of its members when they need it most, is one of our Board's top priorities."

Reasons and context

Iberian Lawyer has interviewed some of the most prominent accredited law firms — Uría Menéndez, Pérez-Llorca, Ecija, Ceca Magán, and Lener — to gather their perspectives on the programme's experience, challenges faced, outcomes achieved, and future plans. The testimonials from these firms reflect a variety of reasons and contexts that led to the adoption of the wellbeing programme.

Asier Arriaga, responsible for occupational health at Uría Menéndez, emphasises the law firm's longstanding commitment to wellbeing: "Maintaining positive mental health is non-negotiable for any organisation committed to its personnel and aspiring to sustain its business model. Law is a demanding profession, and maintaining a proper balance is crucial." **Eva Delgado**, HR director at Pérez-Llorca, highlights that ICAM's programme is "closely aligned with the realities of law practice: pressure, deadlines, and work-life balance can impact lawyers' mental health, a topic not often addressed enough." She concludes that ICAM championing this initiative lends it significant credibility. **Ana Belén Murillo García**, people & culture manager at Ecija,



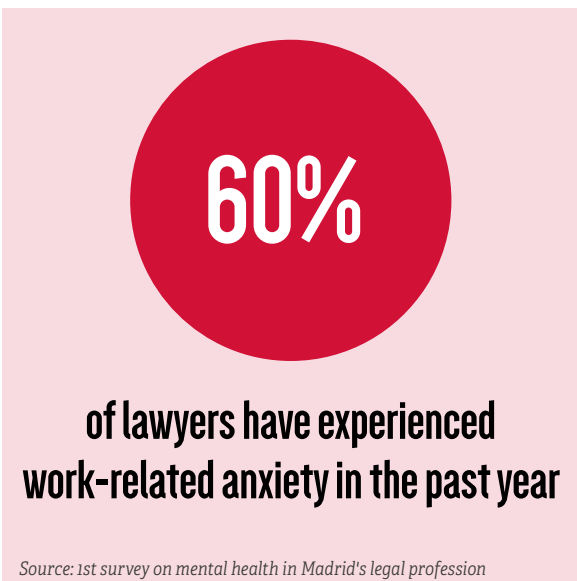
EVA DELGADO

points out that "the reasons for adopting this programme were clear. We knew ICAM could help us establish the foundations of a project we had already been working on, with added value we wouldn't find elsewhere." Ecija, she explains, "has always stood out for ensuring safe working environments in all dimensions."

Participating in this programme and focusing on lawyers' wellbeing responds to multiple pressures and specific challenges in the legal sector, asserts **María López-Olivares Canga**, director of



people and talent at Ceca Magán Abogados. She explains that the firm aims to "improve lawyers' quality of life, prevent mental health issues, and ultimately enhance professional effectiveness while improving the workplace atmosphere." By supporting mental health, firms also ensure better service for clients. **Cristina Peláez Avezuela**, people director at Lener, indicates that "the level of responsibility and workload demanded by the profession necessitates tools for effective emotional management to prevent anxiety, stress, and depression."



ANA BELÉN MURILLO GARCÍA



MARÍA LÓPEZ-OLIVARES CANGA

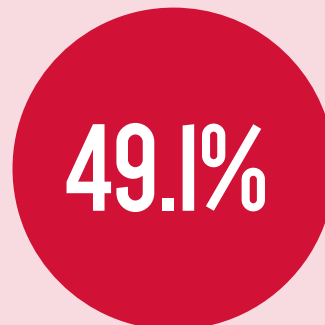
The impact of the programme

The wellbeing programme has had a significant impact on the participating firms, though they are all at different stages of implementation. Delgado explains: "We are still in the very early stage of diagnosing before implementing measures, but we already have a roadmap." López-Olivares Canga states, "We are still in the implementation process, with the initial phase being preliminary diagnosis and setting an action plan. Like any change, it may face initial resistance, but we find awareness-raising and training sessions key to explaining the benefits of these measures, alongside success stories."

2 out of 5 lawyers have considered taking time off but didn't due to workload



Source: 1st survey on mental health in Madrid's legal profession



of lawyers feel their job negatively impacts their mental and psychological state

Source: 1st survey on mental health in Madrid's legal profession

Arriaga comments, "The programme has helped us understand the concerns of other law firms, very similar to ours, and learn practical initiatives we can implement in our organisations. It has also allowed us to build a network of professional contacts that enriches our work in a field where sharing experiences is essential." Peláez Avezuela adds that the programme has made them aware of the importance of a holistic approach to organisational health management. "We identify the organisational wellbeing model developed during the programme as a strategic tool to



CRISTINA PELÁEZ AVEZUELA

MENTAL WELLBEING AMONG SPANISH LAWYERS



Sixty percent of lawyers in Madrid have experienced work-related anxiety in the past year, according to the first study on lawyers' mental health conducted by ICAM, which surveyed 1,088 professionals with an average age of 50. The majority of respondents work in solo practices or as freelancers ([see the news](#)).

This study, as emphasized to *Iberian Lawyer* by **Eugenio Ribón**, dean of ICAM and president of the ICAM Cortina Foundation, "not only reveals crucial data about the wellbeing of our professionals, but also marks a milestone in our mission to break the taboo that has surrounded mental health in our profession for too long. It's something that wasn't talked about, not because it didn't exist, as this pioneering study in Spain demonstrates."

Other findings from the study indicate that about half of the lawyers feel that their work prevents them from enjoying quality time with friends and family, particularly affecting women, younger professionals, and freelancers. The COVID-19 pandemic, while promoting remote work and greater flexibility, has increased workload and stress.

The study also reveals a perception of lack of professional and economic appreciation, with nearly half of the respondents experiencing a negative impact on their mental and psychological health. Many express frustration over the treatment received from clients and legal operators.

Despite growing awareness about the importance of wellbeing at work, a quarter of lawyers do not receive support in this regard, and an alarming 81% are unaware of available external resources for wellbeing issues, highlighting the need to improve communication about these services.

achieve wellbeing goals, considering holistic management of people's health. Although we haven't yet defined and documented a model, we believe it will have a significant impact on professionals' wellbeing and productivity, as well as receiving positive recognition from the firm's clients and stakeholders."

Hearing from key figures in the wellbeing field "who reflect with data and success stories the benefits a wellbeing plan can generate makes you rethink many things. For us, one of these things was scope," says Murillo García. Although it's too early to evaluate goals and data, participation in Ecija's programme "is very high, around 80%. The next step will be to measure whether we are meeting objectives and what the return on investment is."

4 out of 5 lawyers are unaware of available external support



Source: 1st survey on mental health in Madrid's legal profession

Challenges and future

Among the main challenges in programme implementation, Arriaga highlights resistance to change and the perception that it is a personal issue. "To overcome these resistances, collaborative work, continuous listening, and ongoing awareness are needed," he explains, emphasising Uría Menéndez's efforts to raise awareness about mental health issues, reduce stigma, and maintain a healthy work environment by providing tools to prevent and address these problems. Delgado mentions internal barriers

25%

of lawyers do not receive adequate support

Source: 1st survey on mental health in Madrid's legal profession

and the taboo associated with mental health as primary challenges. "It's crucial to name the elephant in the room and talk about it, but from a constructive perspective, acknowledging its existence and working on concrete solutions," she says. She stresses the importance of dialogue and awareness-raising.



ANA BUITRAGO

Murillo García comments that another major challenge is "how to train healthy habits to improve emotional health." Despite actions already taken on issues like work-life balance, flexibility, and training, Ecija aims to "create initiatives focused on the individual that truly make a difference in their lives."

López-Olivares Canga notes that at Ceca Magán, they are in the process of implementing new practices and says, "Like any change, it may face initial resistance, but we find awareness-raising and training sessions key to explaining the benefits of these measures, alongside success stories."

Peláez Avezuela stresses the need for "having a figure responsible for organisational wellbeing, ensuring and guaranteeing the model's application, overseeing allocated resources, and with support and leadership from the management." She also highlights the importance of well-defined leadership to provide psychological safety to teams and manage daily situations. She underscores that developing managerial skills is a key challenge for the organisation.

The future of wellbeing in the legal sector

Firms are advancing in the implementation of wellbeing programmes, focusing on personalisation to meet diverse employee needs. **Ana Buitrago**, Vice President of the ICAM Foundation, highlights the importance of flexibility and continuous evaluation to improve these programmes, stating that "not all employees have the same needs." The integration of technology, such as wellbeing tracking apps and mindfulness, is crucial for personalising and monitoring progress. Buitrago emphasises a holistic approach covering physical, mental, financial health, and personal development, mentioning that "training leaders and managers in promoting wellbeing is crucial for establishing and maintaining this culture."

ICAM's commitment, along with recognised firms, to their employees' emotional health, concludes, is a crucial step towards improving quality of life and professional performance in the legal sector. 📌