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# FBE BULLETIN

NEWS AND UPDATES  
FOR MEMBER BARS

QUARTERLY BULLETIN



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# Dear Colleagues,



it is a pleasure to address you in this final edition of the “FBE Bulletin” for the year 2025.

As we look back on the recent Autumn FBE Congress in Frankfurt, I would like to recall the substantive exchanges that took place among the attending Bars and Law Societies. One of the principal themes of the Congress was the well-being of lawyers. Several member Bars presented initiatives aimed at supporting a healthier life-work balance for practitioners who routinely navigate substantial workloads and demanding, often stressful, professional circumstances. These discussions demonstrated a clear recognition that safeguarding the well-being of lawyers is essential to the sustainability of our profession.

In this regard, I would also like to underline a priority of the current Presidency: the support and development of young lawyers. Strengthening their involvement within the FBE, expanding opportunities for participation, and fostering an environment in which they can grow professionally remain central to our strategic direction.

As we approach the Christmas season, these reflections gain particular relevance. This period offers a much-needed opportunity for all colleagues to pause, reflect, and restore balance, and I encourage everyone—especially younger members of our Bars—to take the time needed to rest and reconnect before entering the New Year.

The Presidency wishes to extend its sincere thanks to all those who contribute to and support the work of the Federation: the presidents and members of our Commissions, the representatives of our member Bars who regularly participate in FBE activities, and the many colleagues who devote their time and expertise to advancing our shared objectives. We also express our appreciation to our partners and to the international organisations with which we work in promoting and defending the fundamental values of the legal profession in Europe and beyond.

On behalf of the FBE Presidency, I extend warm Christmas and New Year wishes. May the coming year bring health, balance, and continued commitment to the principles that unite us.

I look forward to working together in pursuit of our common mission.

*Michael Griem, FBE President*



## **Interview with Cristina Vallejo, President of the Ilustre Colegio de la Abogacía de Barcelona (Barcelona Bar Association)**

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**Congratulations on your appointment as President. What are your first impressions and priorities as you take over the leadership of one of Spain's most influential Bar Associations?**

Firstly, thank you very much for your kind words and for giving me the opportunity to share this interview with you for the European Bars Federation (FBE) e-newsletter.

One of the first impressions I would like to highlight, regarding the enormous responsibility of taking on the leadership of one of the most influential Bar Associations, not only in Spain but also in Europe, is that I have felt very supported.

As President, the support I have received at an institutional level from various representatives of different administrations and organizations, as well as from various professional groups, both in the justice system and in other sectors, and the personal support of many colleagues, has been a revitalizing boost of positive energy.

This is undoubtedly comforting and very necessary, given the unique context in which we find ourselves and the momentous challenges that lie ahead. Although it is true that in my case I have previous experience as a member of the Council of the President Emeritus M<sup>a</sup> Eugenia Gay Rosell between 2017 and 2021, since taking office on 3 July 2025, I have taken on the challenge of leading the ICAB with a new perspective compared to then and, above all, with great enthusiasm.



And I do so accompanied by a magnificent Council made up of a professional and cross-disciplinary team, whose main mission is to reaffirm and deepen the prestige of the Barcelona Bar Association, emphasizing the defence of the individual and collective rights of its members, as well as the social function of our Corporation. To this end, the current Council has designed an ambitious 2025-2029 Governance Plan, comprising 100 measures grouped into the following 15 program priorities:

1. Public functions: Ethics, Legal Aid and Fees.
2. Justice and Protection of the Legal Profession.
3. Training.
4. ADR.
5. Bar Association Life.
6. Corporate and Public Sector Law (In-house Legal Services).
7. Young Lawyers.
8. Senior Lawyers.
9. More Social Lawyers.
10. Delegations.
11. Catalan in Law.
12. Internationalization of the Legal Profession.
13. Governance, Environment, and Ethics.
14. Fair Retirement.
15. Artificial Intelligence.

It is a comprehensive program that aims to focus on the specific needs that arise at each stage of professional practice, as well as the different ways in which the legal profession can be practiced, especially taking into account the paradigm shifts resulting from digitalization and the important reforms being carried out with the so-called efficiency laws.



**The Barcelona Bar Association has long been an active member of the Federation of European Bar Associations (FBE). How do you see the role of the ICAB in strengthening European cooperation between Bar Associations and the legal profession?**

The ICAB was one of the founding members of the FBE, during the time of President Emeritus Eugeni Gay Montalvo, and since then it has renewed its commitment to this organization, which today has more than 200 Bar Associations as members, representing a total of more than 1,000,000 lawyers from 20 different countries.


Since then, and even earlier, as a participating member of the Conférence des Grands Barreaux d'Europe, the predecessor of the current FBE, the ICAB has been supporting its members and responding to the challenges of an increasingly complex and globalized world. The internationalization of law and client needs requires the Bar Association to focus on strengthening these cooperative and friendly relations with the main players and representatives of the legal profession at European and global level.

The FBE offers an ideal framework for this objective, as well as providing a forum for reflection and collective debate on common problems affecting the professional practice of law.

For this reason, at the ICAB we have proposed, as a core part of our 2025-2029 Governance Plan, among other actions, to attend the FBE's meetings, contributing to those issues in which we are required to do so, sharing the vision of legal certainty that we defend and promote from a global city such as Barcelona, promoting and strengthening the network of International Delegates, as well as attending and organizing, in coordination with the International and European Union Law Section, high-level conferences and training sessions as a way of promoting networking.

Without a doubt, European cooperation between Bar Associations and lawyers is essential, not only because of the increasing importance of European Union law within the legal systems of each Member State, but also because of the growing number of cases with an international element. In this regard, the ICAB can play an important role, as it is a member of numerous international organizations representing law and justice, and has extensive experience in supporting members in the exercise of their profession abroad.

An example of this, of strong collaboration between the various European Bar Associations in the FBE forum, is the Convention on the Protection of the Legal Profession, which is still pending ratification by Spain, and is so necessary to eradicate the European legal profession at risk.

 **Spain and Catalonia have a strong tradition of legal advocacy and innovation. How can the ICAB share its experience with other European Bar Associations?**

Legal defense and innovation have been a constant feature in the development of the Spanish and Catalan legal systems, from the codification

processes of the 19th century, through the successive stages we have experienced, to the integration of European Union law today.

The ICAB has always been active in the modernization of law, offering its technical and legal perspective through various proposals *de lege ferenda* on a wide range of issues of concern to society, the most current of which, by way of example, are illegal occupation, the right to housing, and multiple recidivism.

As it already does in its current congresses, and as a new way of collaborating, would be to seek the participation of European speakers from the FBE. The Bar is strategically analysing European regulation in areas such as sustainability, anti-money laundering, compliance, and artificial intelligence. The value of this debate is immense and shared among all the Bar Associations. There will be a complete revolution in this area in the coming years, which is why knowledge of its practical application at the European level must be developed jointly and in a pioneering manner.

Finally, one of the measures we have included in the 2025–2029 Government Plan is to strengthen the Commission for the Promotion and Study of Catalan Civil Law, which stands out for being a very European and open regulatory body.



### **What do you consider the main challenges currently facing the legal profession in Spain and Europe?**

Specifically in Spain, in recent years there have been a series of very important structural reforms at the organizational, procedural, and digital levels, under the so-called Public Justice Service Efficiency Laws.

In many respects, these reforms represent a paradigm shift for the legal profession. On the one hand, the base of the judicial pyramid, originally designed to meet the needs of the 19th century, with a more rural and geographically fragmented society, is being updated. With the reform, there is a shift from single-judge courts as the first line of jurisdictional action, with a judge, a court clerk, and several support staff, to a Court of First Instance as a collegiate body in each judicial district, organized into specialized sections to handle cases in a collective manner.

On the other hand, in civil jurisdiction, which is my area of expertise, MASCs have been introduced as a general requirement for the admissibility of a lawsuit. As lawyers, we were already engaged in negotiations

prior to filing any lawsuit, in the interests of our clients and always with the intention of avoiding litigation, as we are ethically obliged to do. However, this is now a requirement that we must meet in order for a lawsuit to be admitted, despite the added time and difficulties that may arise in practice in some cases.

In any case, the legal profession has always been open to change and has demonstrated its ability to adapt in the interests of the law and in response to the legal concerns of citizens at all times. Likewise, for some time now, we have been experiencing a legislative maelstrom, which is a challenge that is also common at the European level, along with the digital transformation of society.

Therefore, in addition to legal knowledge, today's legal professionals, both in Spain and in Europe, are required to have other types of competencies and skills, known as soft skills, among which we must highlight, although this is merely an illustrative list, the ability to work in more flexible and technological environments, both from an international and a digital point of view.

Finally, and taking this context into account, legal professionals must seek continuous training and commit to specialization, but without losing sight of the perspective or broad-mindedness regarding the legal system that every good lawyer must have.



### **How do you plan to strengthen relations between the ICAB and young lawyers, interns, and newly qualified lawyers?**

As mentioned above, the ICAB must support its members throughout all stages of their professional practice, paying particular attention to their early years, and facilitate, as far as possible, their compliance with professional association obligations and professional training.

This is a function of the ICAB specifically provided for in its Statutes, specifically in Article 9(h), and is one of the priorities of our 2025-2029 Government Program, which gives priority to young lawyers.

Therefore, in addition to dividing membership fees to facilitate access to the profession and promoting a scholarship system as measures to ensure that talent is exercised in Barcelona, we will deepen the already excellent relations we have with the Young Lawyers Group (GAJ), as the specific professional body representing this sector.

In this regard, we count on the presence and voice of the GAJ at all Council meetings, to learn firsthand about the main concerns of young lawyers. Likewise, the GAJ may appoint members to represent this sector on all the Delegate Committees of the Council, whose main mission is none other than to assist the latter in the performance of its public functions, which the legal system attributes to professional associations.

Finally, and to paraphrase my two youngest colleagues on the Board, Cristina Capuz and Alexander Salvador, in their statements commemorating Young Lawyers' Day on October 31, we must bear in mind that the law is a reflection of society, and therefore it is constantly evolving. It is the role of the ICAB to facilitate access to the profession and ensure quality training.

In short, the ICAB supports young Lawyers through guidance and mentoring, through its job pool and agreements with companies and universities, and through advice on entrepreneurship, because today, in addition to being a lawyer, you have to be an entrepreneur and acquire a range of skills, as we mentioned earlier, which can range from leadership and business creation techniques to team management and talent attraction.



### **What advice would you give to young female lawyers who aspire to leadership positions in Bar Associations or professional associations?**

Firstly, they must dare to take the plunge. Although we have made great strides in terms of legislation, equality, and work-life balance, it is still necessary, from a sisterhood perspective, to encourage women to be bold and trust in their abilities.

At the Barcelona Bar Association, we carry out numerous actions in favor of equality, having been pioneers in many of them, such as the promotion of an Equality Plan that, in addition to the Bar Association, could also serve as a model for law firms, as well as a "Development Program for Female Executives: Women on the Board of Directors," which is now in its sixth edition.

Secondly, being aware of how demanding our profession is and the enormous responsibility that comes with certain positions, the advice I would give to young women aspiring to occupy them is to surround themselves with a team of people who share their ambition and commitment to a project that is worth taking on certain challenges for.





**Finally, what message would you like to convey to the member associations of the FBE and the European legal community as a whole?**

First and foremost, I would like to convey a message of reassurance. I am optimistic by nature, and while it is true that we are currently experiencing significant changes at a rapid pace, many of these changes will result in better service.

I am thinking, for example, of digitalization in general and artificial intelligence in particular, which, far from viewing with concern, we must consider as another tool that should be put at the service of people and law firms. It is even a tool that, if we women prepare ourselves technically and empower ourselves, can reduce the gender bias that still exists.

It is true that we must legally limit its use, above all to ensure that fundamental rights, especially privacy, are not violated, ensuring that new technologies are used responsibly and ethically.

Also, from the Bar Associations and as a sign of the social function that defines us, we must continue to work in defence of the interests and freedoms of citizens, especially the most vulnerable, promoting legal culture and seeking actions that have a positive impact on our environment, such as working to be able to participate alongside the legislative power, for which European data and culture are very important as a precedent for change.

In this regard, the message I would like to convey to the Bar members of the FBE and to the legal community as a whole is that the Barcelona Bar Association is committed to continuing to work for the law and in service of the law, both for its members and for the citizens at large. ◀



**ICAB**  
ADVOCACIA  
BARCELONA



## ARTICLES

# from the Members of the FBE Commissions

## AI the EU and US: The Deep Fake

Professor Mark Engelman

One of the world's all-time impostors was Arthur Orton, aka Thomas Castro. He was a butcher from Wagga Wagga, Australia and having seen the Dowager Lady Tichborne's newspaper article requesting news of her son who had left Great Britain in 1823 assail The Bella, which had floundered and was presumed lost responded by claiming to be her estranged son. He successfully deceived her into believing he was her heir and received £1,000 by way of annuity.

History repeats itself. In fact, according to [Wikipedia](#), photographic manipulation was first developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the production of the now quaintly termed "motion picture" industry. Today AI has given us the portmanteaux word "deepfake" which combines the words "deep learning" and "fake". It is now used to create a range of digital materials from child abuse video clips to faking the voice over and images of well-known personalities in the entertainment industry.

So far we have seen Barak Ombama mouthing someone else's words, those of a Jordan Peets, in a clip in which the ex-President states: "President Trump is a total and complete dip s\*\*t". That was in 2018, the date the AI video clip was created and in order to avoid confusion not the date the epithet applied.

Hollywood's actors and writers are naturally in revolt at the risk AI and deep fake poses to the entertainment industry. A placard of one of the strikers of the Writers Guild of America read: "AI wrote this sign". The word "the"

had been crossed-out and replaced with the word “this” written in a manuscript hand which suggests that AI created images will never be as good as those which depict human actors. The union is concerned that its members will lose control of their lucrative likenesses but their reproduction in unauthorised audio and visual works.

In the first of these 2-part articles the proposed EU AI Act intends to shift regulation on to the creators of AI. However, at least as regards the entertainment industry, legal remedies to, at least that malevolent aspect of the deep fake industry, already exist.

Within England and Wales personality rights have long protected the image of famous people within the rather narrow confines of passing off. Take Rhianna, for example, who successfully injunctioned Top Shop from using her image on its’ range of t-shirts. There existed a close connection between Rhianna and Top Shop which assisted the grant of the injunction. She had been Top Shop’s fashion model and ambassadress. Without such a close connection the action may well have failed. In *Eddie Irvine v Talk Sport Radio*, the misuse of Mr Irvine’s image holding a radio branded Talksport, was based upon the notion of a false endorsement of the product, in that case, the radio broadcast, however many other cases have failed.

In some other countries of the world image/personality rights are capable of protection. Australia and Hong Kong apply the same principles to those here. The basis of the action is passing off.

In Canada, particular provinces protect those rights under statute provided one can demonstrate both an intention to create the confusion caused to the public and commercial gain to the Defendant. Cyprus prevents advertising by false endorsement. Denmark and France excludes protection for famous personalities. Germany restricts the right to a person’s name and picture. So voice-over’s are not covered. Greek protection is only afforded to the misuse of photographs taken in public places. Spain relies upon the Data Protection Act. Quite surprisingly, China will protect the misuse of an image, whilst it seems according to public sources, the Government covertly soaks up millions of images of unsuspecting members of the public.

South Africa and the United States are countries which extend protection not merely to the likeness of a person but even their attributes. They include the name, image, likeness or other aspects of identity. The US Supreme

Court protected misuse of clips from Hugo Zanchini's appearance in the film, Human Cannon Ball. California has protected the use of footage from Back to the Future which unlawfully depicted Cripsin Glover. Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman prevented use of their images on cosmetics. 30 of the 50 states recognise rights of publicity.



But no country has managed to get quite as far as the little island of Guernsey, more accurately named The Bailiwick of Guernsey. It protects image and personality rights right down to their mannerisms. It applies a registered trade mark-like analysis to infringement. A personality registers their image/mannerism on a register and it is renewed like any other trade mark. It has registered only 80 or so image rights since 2012 the date the Ordinance came into effect but they include “the likes” of Philip Marlowe the fictional detective created by Raymond Chandler, Stelios, the founder of Easyjet and Tom Cleverly the international footballer. As the list suggests it protects fictional and real-life personalities as well as dead ones. Yes, and it protects voice overs alongside the signature, likeness, appearance, silhouette, feature, face, expressions (verbal or facial), gestures, mannerisms or any other distinctive characteristics or personal attribute.

The value of registering an image right on Guernsey appears at first sight too light a counterweight to the impact of the global dissemination of deep fake images but the sea of the internet laps up upon many a distant shore. A deep fake image published on a website in say Columbia becomes an image right infringement in Guernsey which translates into an injunction enforceable in England & Wales.

Returning to the Mr Obama deep fake clip, the ex-President's difficulty arises from the fair dealing defence which permits use of his image for the purposes of news reporting, commentary and satire. Jordan Peets was surely joking when he described Donald Trump in such terms?

However, Arthur Orton, the Titchborne Claimant, was in fact revealed by the jury in R v Castro as an imposter and he was sentenced to 14 years for perjury. Upon release he maintained he was Titchborne. When he died in 1898 the Tichborne family permitted him a coffin plate: “Sir Roger Charles Doughty Tichborne” simply because “no legal means of preventing such an outrage existed”. Now 6-foot under, Author Orton brings a new meaning to the term “deep fake”. ◀

# Geographical Indications for European Craftsmanship:

## The New Frontier Between Protection, Identity and Global Strategy

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Chiara Salerno

**T**he adoption of Regulation (EU) 2023/2411 on geographical indications for craft and industrial products is more than a legislative update. It represents a shift of paradigm for the entire made in Europe ecosystem. For the first time, the Union clearly, coherently and independently of the agri-food framework recognises that craftsmanship, too, is rooted in traditions, techniques and know-how embedded in specific territories, and that these deserve protection just as much as food or wine.

Yet the true significance of the new system goes beyond its legal structure, however important and innovative that may be. Its potential impact touches the identity of territories, the competitiveness of micro-enterprises, the economic value of tradition, and Europe's reputation in international markets. Above all, it introduces a crucial question: **how can legal protection be turned into a real driver of development?**

### 1. The Silent Revolution of Regulation 2023/2411

Regulation (EU) 2023/2411 introduces, for the first time at European level, an autonomous definition of craft and industrial products—the so-called *craft products*.

These are goods:

- ◆ produced within a specific geographical area,
- ◆ characterised by a quality, reputation or distinctive feature linked to that origin,
- ◆ made using traditional techniques, even when supplemented by modern or digital tools.

The Regulation therefore covers both entirely handmade objects and semi-industrial products that retain a locally characteristic method. Exemplary cases include Murano glass, Irish tweed, Grottaglie ceramics or Solingen knives: products intrinsically connected to the history and intangible heritage of their communities.



The EU formally acknowledges that craft products are not simple objects: they are expressions of a territory, of material culture, and of an intangible heritage that often risks disappearing under the pressure of mass industrial production.

The Regulation introduces:

- ◆ a clear definition of craft and industrial products linked to a geographical origin;
- ◆ a harmonised EU-wide registration system;
- ◆ a more transparent certification and control regime;
- ◆ simplified access for third countries;
- ◆ the possibility to convert existing national protections into EU GIs.

It is a framework that brings order to a traditionally fragmented sector, where pockets of excellence (such as Murano) coexist with areas entirely lacking protective tools.

## 2. Geographical Origin as an Economic Asset (Not Only a Legal One)

A GI (Geographical Indication) is not merely a label. It is a **promise**: it tells where a product comes from, how it is made, and why it cannot authentically be reproduced elsewhere.

This dimension is extremely powerful in today's markets. We live in an era in which global consumers value authenticity, local production and deep-rooted narratives. The global standardisation of goods has triggered a countermovement: the search for what is unique, non-replicable, *slow*.

GIs perfectly align with this trend and can generate:

- ◆ premium prices linked to perceived quality;



- ◆ differentiation in saturated markets;
- ◆ trust through verified production standards;
- ◆ traceability, increasingly central to sustainability.

Europe, with its extraordinarily rich craft heritage, finally has a tool to transform this richness into competitive value.

### 3. From Technique to Storytelling: Why GIs Become Brands

The Regulation requires defining a “traditional” or “characteristic” technique, even when not fully manual. Digital tools are allowed, provided that the technique remains inherently local.

This is the point where legal protection meets communication.

A GI becomes truly effective only when supported by a coherent narrative that explains:

- ◆ the history of the product;
- ◆ its territorial specificity;
- ◆ the cultural continuity of its production;
- ◆ the role of local communities.

The strength of the “Murano” designation—often cited as an exemplary case—derives not only from the glassmaking technique but from the collective narrative built over time: training of masters, process control, and a generational bond with the island.

The Regulation, at least in theory, enables similar stories to emerge across the continent.

### 4. The Economic Model: Consortia, Licences and Governance

One of the most innovative aspects of the Regulation is that it encourages producers to organise themselves collectively.

GIs are sustainable only if managed by:

- ◆ producer associations,
- ◆ local consortia,
- ◆ territorial bodies,
- ◆ craft clusters or districts.

These structures can:

- ◆ define modular technical specifications;

- ◆ grant licences and sub-licences;
- ◆ enforce quality controls;
- ◆ generate revenue through certification;
- ◆ prevent conflicts among producers.

The logic shifts from the individual artisan to the production community: protection becomes **infrastructure**.

## 5. The Gap Between Countries: The Polish Case and Beyond

During the work of the IP Law Commission, a striking fact emerged: in some countries, such as Poland, significant craft traditions exist, yet very few registrations of GIs for craft products have been pursued.

This highlights a broader issue: **the lack of awareness of the economic potential of IP protection within the craft sector**.

Yet GIs could:

- ◆ help peripheral territories emerge;
- ◆ safeguard techniques at risk of disappearing;
- ◆ create local employment;
- ◆ attract cultural tourism;
- ◆ stimulate public and private investment.

The Regulation opens a window of opportunity, but a strong cultural effort is required. Here is where legal professionals play a crucial role: not only in “registration”, but in guiding processes.



## 6. Tradition vs Innovation: The Digital Challenge

The legislative text explicitly permits the use of digital tools. This detail opens a complex debate: What does “traditional technique” mean when a product is shaped partly with digital modelling, 3D printing or design software? How do we define a locally characteristic procedure in the age of open-source technologies? The Regulation adopts a pragmatic approach: the technique must remain territorially rooted, **even when technologically evolved**. This flexibility allows craft enterprises to innovate without losing identity—an essential balance for global competitiveness.

## 7. From Law to Strategy: What Needs to Happen Now

Registration is only the tip of the iceberg. For GIs to become truly effective economic tools, three layers must operate together:

1. **Legal Layer.** Clear technical specifications, coherent definitions of techniques, governance, licensing and controls.
2. **Entrepreneurial Layer.** Sustainable business models, structured consortia, long-term planning.
3. **Communication Layer.** Territorial branding, cultural storytelling, digital presence, participation in international fairs.

Only the integration of these layers makes it possible to transform a legal asset into a competitive advantage.

## 8. Conclusion: A European Opportunity, Not a Formality

The real challenge of the new Regulation is not to register as many GIs as possible but to activate territorial ecosystems capable of leveraging GIs as:

- ◆ instruments of identity,
- ◆ drivers of development,
- ◆ guarantees of authenticity,
- ◆ narrative platforms,
- ◆ competitive tools in global markets.

When well designed, IP protection becomes industrial policy.

Regulation (EU) 2023/2411 finally gives European craftsmanship the opportunity to achieve this—with ambition, structure and an international outlook. ◀

# Smart Labor Safety and Regulatory Barriers: Reconciling the AI Act, Intellectual Property, and Labor Law in Workplace Protection

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**Roberto Sammarchi**  
Avvocato, AIAS (IT)  
Representative in ENSHPO

## The High-Risk Classification Dilemma

The European AI Act introduces a risk-based approach that heavily impacts the HSW sector. AI systems intended to be used as safety components of products covered by Union harmonization legislation (such as Regulation (EU) 2016/425 on Personal Protective Equipment), or which are themselves such products, are classified as high-risk if a third-party conformity assessment is required. This encompasses “smart PPE”—helmets detecting fatigue, vests monitoring cardiac rhythms, or exoskeletons adjusting support based on biometric data.

Italian Law No. 132/2025 reinforces this by mandating that AI in the workplace must be “safe, reliable, transparent” and strictly prohibits usage that contrasts with human dignity or privacy. While these requirements ensure safety, they impose significant compliance costs (data quality management, technical documentation, record-keeping) that can deter Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

## The Need for a New Strategy

The high-risk classification should be viewed not merely as a cost, but as a market differentiator. In Italy, Decree-Law 159/2025 explicitly authorizes INAIL (National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Work) to fund interventions supporting micro, small, and medium enterprises in purchasing “PPE characterized by innovative technologies and intelligent systems”. This legislative move creates a direct economic incentive for adopting compliant, high-end AI safety tools, effectively subsidizing the compliance costs for end-users and





creating a robust market for developers who navigate the regulatory landscape successfully.

## **Intellectual Property vs. Statutory Transparency**

A critical friction point exists between the AI Act's transparency requirements and IP protection. High-risk AI systems require detailed technical documentation to prove compliance. Italian Law 132/2025 establishes that information regarding AI systems used in professional contexts must be communicated in clear, simple language.

Developers fear that disclosing training data parameters, logic flows, and validation datasets to conformity assessment bodies or via public registers might compromise trade secrets.

## **Proposed Solutions**

The legal framework permits “layered transparency”. The disclosure required for users (workers and safety managers) focuses on the functionality, limitations, and accuracy metrics of the system, not the source code. For regulatory bodies, trade secrets are protected under Directive (EU) 2016/943. Developers must implement a “black box” approach for the IP core while ensuring the “input-output” logic is explainable. Italian Law 132/2025 supports this balance by mandating transparency on the metrics used to measure accuracy and robustness, without explicitly requiring code disclosure.

## **Labor Law: The Barrier of Remote Monitoring**

The most significant deployment barrier for smart HSW technologies in Italy is Article 4 of the Workers' Statute (Law 300/1970). Continuous monitoring of a worker's physiological state via AI (e.g., a smartwatch monitoring heart rate to prevent heatstroke) constitutes a tool that incidentally derives information about the worker's activity. This requires a collective agreement with trade unions or authorization from the Labor Inspectorate.

Italian Law 132/2025 reiterates that AI in the workplace must comply with EU data protection laws and explicitly references the obligation to inform workers about “automated monitoring systems”.

To overcome this, the deployment must be strictly purpose-bound.



**Privacy by Design:** Systems must use Edge AI (processing data locally on the device) rather than Cloud AI. The employer should receive only an “alert” (e.g., “Man Down” or “Critical Fatigue”), never the raw biometric stream.

**Safety-Only Agreement:** Negotiations with unions must frame the AI strictly as a safety device, explicitly excluding any use of data for performance evaluation or disciplinary action.

**Transparency:** As per Law 132/2025, the employer must disclose the logic, functioning, and accuracy levels of the monitoring system to the worker.

## The “Digital Omnibus” Proposal: A Path to Simplification

While the current landscape appears fragmented, the European Commission is considering a “Digital Omnibus” package to streamline digital regulations. Although currently a proposal and not binding law, this initiative aims to reduce the burden of overlapping reporting obligations across the GDPR, the AI Act, and the Cyber Resilience Act.

The core principle of “Ask Once” would allow developers to submit data regarding their AI system to a single competent authority, which then propagates the necessary compliance verifications to other relevant bodies. For the HSW sector, this could mean that the technical documentation prepared for the AI Act certification could automatically satisfy specific data protection impact assessment (DPIA) requirements or product safety documentation.

Professionals and enterprises should monitor this proposal closely. If enacted, it would significantly lower the administrative barrier for smart safety devices, allowing resources to be redirected from bureaucratic compliance to technological innovation, further aligning with the Italian legislative intent to promote AI as a tool to improve working conditions and productivity. ◀

## Designs and models in the digital ecosystem: Important changes introduced by the European “Design Package”

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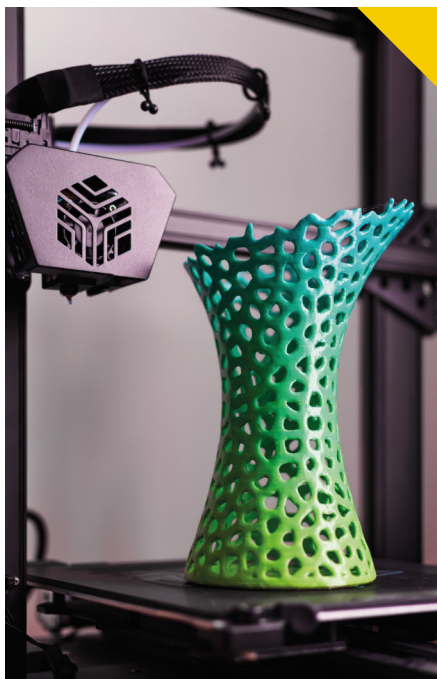
**Lavinia Savini**  
Avv.

**T**he dialectic between the material and immaterial dimensions of design is a structural element of design law. Just think of the Court of Justice’s ruling in case C-335/12, Nintendo vs PC Box, which represented a paradigmatic moment in interpretative evolution, recognising the possibility of protecting the appearance of a product even in the absence of its material realisation. The Court stated that the mere two-dimensional representation of the console, reproduced on the packaging of an accessory, could constitute an infringement of the design, thus emphasising the conceptual autonomy of the product’s appearance with respect to its physical realisation.

At the regulatory level, an evolutionary line consistent with these premises led to the adoption of the “design package” of 23 October 2024, consisting of Regulation (EU) 2024/2822 and Directive (EU) 2024/2823. This reform represents a **necessary response**, aimed, as the EU Council itself pointed out, **“at updating the legislation on designs dating back 20 years, and these texts are intended to facilitate the protection of industrial designs and to adapt EU law in this area to the challenges of the digital world and 3D printing”**.

The new regulatory framework introduces a comprehensive revision of the concept of design, which is now defined as the appearance of the whole or a part of a product resulting from its visible features, including not only lines, contours, colours, shape, materials and surface, but also movement, transitions, animations and the spatial arrangement of objects suitable for creating indoor or outdoor environments. This results in an extension of the scope of protection to include the layout of physical or virtual spaces as well as dynamic graphic solutions, even when not incorporated into a material medium.

In line with this extension, the European legislator has imposed on Member States the obligation to accept modes of representation suitable for making dynamic and digital characteristics perceptible, such as videos, image sequences and three-dimensional digital models, provided that



the whole is clear and allows the claimed elements to be identified with precision, in accordance with a principle consistently affirmed by the Court of Justice. The harmonisation of forms of representation removes from the sphere of national autonomy a matter previously characterised by heterogeneous practices, with effects already visible in the growing number of applications for registration relating to digital designs and graphic interfaces. It is also possible to include up to fifty designs in a single application, regardless of the product class, bringing the administrative management of the design system closer to that of trade marks.


Alongside the expansion of the scope of protection, **the reform**

**addresses safeguards to meet emerging technological challenges.**

Particular attention is paid to 3D printing, which allows for the almost immediate replication of physical objects from digital files. **The legislation equates not only the production of physical copies with counterfeiting, but also the making available, sharing or distribution of digital files, software or media containing a registered design. In this way, protection is no longer limited to the circulation of physical goods, but also extends to the digital “instructions” that make a design replicable.** This decision, motivated by the growing spread of additive technologies and their use in combination with artificial intelligence systems, is accompanied by the strengthening of customs controls, which allow goods destined for non-EU countries to be blocked at the borders if they are suspected of infringing registered designs.

Finally, the reform also considers the need to safeguard cultural heritage. The Directive gives Member States the power to refuse or invalidate the registration of designs that reproduce elements of historical or cultural significance, thus preventing attempts to appropriate cultural heritage in the form of industrial designs. Although this opening strengthens

the protection of cultural assets, it requires national legal systems to strike a delicate balance between the protection of cultural identity, creative freedom and the economic interests of businesses.

Finally, in terms of communication, the symbol  is introduced to indicate the registration of a design. This new feature joins the traditional symbols of trademarks and copyright, offering owners an immediate tool to signal the presence of legal protection and discourage unauthorised use.

In this context, with the transposition of the European Union's so-called “*Design Package*”, Italy is also preparing to make significant regulatory changes in the field of intellectual property, extending legal protection to virtual spaces, movements and digital animations. This is what is happening with the recent approval of the **EUROPEAN DELEGATION LAW 2025** (Italian Law No. 91 of 13 June 2025), which gives the government the power to transpose the European reform package and **update the Industrial Property Code**. In particular, the delegation provides for the updating of the Industrial Property Code, the definition of the **conditions for exclusion or invalidity** of designs and models, the establishment of a **rapid administrative procedure for declaring invalidity** at the UIBM, and the reorganisation of the **procedures of the Appeals Commission**. However, it should be noted that, to date, Italy is in the initial phase of the transposition process: the European Delegation Law 2025 has authorised the Government to implement the Design Package, but the legislative decree transposing Directive (EU) 2024/2823 has not yet been adopted.

Taken together, these reforms contribute to the creation of a more modern design protection system, consistent with technological and cultural changes and more balanced in economic and competitive terms. With the new regulatory definition, apps, digital layouts and interactive graphic content also obtain full protection.

However, several questions remain unanswered: for example, what criteria should be applied to assess classic requirements such as novelty and individual character when the model exists only in digital form and its perception depends exclusively on visual representation? Only time will tell whether these changes will allow design law to fully integrate into the digital ecosystem. ◀





# The (not so) artificial intelligence of the Italian legislator.

The new Italian law  
and copyright that remains human

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**Andrea D'Ambrosio**  
Solicitor

## 1. Introduction and context

In recent years, the spread of generative systems—capable of creating text, images, sounds or code—has increasingly blurred the line between *intellectual work* and algorithmic results.

Artificial intelligence is no longer just a technical support, but a creative agent capable of producing content that is often indistinguishable from human-created content.

With Law No. 132 of 23 September 2025, which came into force on 10 October, Italy became the first European country to adopt comprehensive legislation on AI.

This intervention aims to bring order to a rapidly evolving context, reaffirming a key principle: creativity remains a human prerogative.

## 2. The 'humanity reserve': human beings at the centre

Among the amendments to the 1941 copyright law, one clarification stands out as having a profound impact: protection is only granted to works that are 'the fruit of human ingenuity'.

The legislator thus reaffirms a principle of legal anthropocentrism: protection cannot be granted without the presence of an author with legal capacity and intent.

Content generated entirely autonomously by an AI system cannot, therefore, constitute a protected work. This approach is reflected in US case law: in the case of *A Recent Entrance to Paradise*, the District of Columbia Court of Appeals confirmed that copyright protection requires the presence of a human author.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Thaler v. Perlmutter*, U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, 18 March 2025. *Thaler v. Perlmutter*, U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, 18 March 2025.

The Court of Justice of the European Union has also ruled that a work is protected only if it reflects the ‘personality’ of the author and results from ‘free and creative choices’.<sup>2</sup>

From this perspective, Law 132/2025 incorporates an already established principle but gives it symbolic value: it reaffirms that creativity, in order to be legally recognised, cannot yet be delegated to machines.



### 3. ‘Assisted’ works: creativity mediated by AI

The law does not exclude protection for hybrid works created ‘with the help’ of artificial intelligence. In such cases, protection remains possible provided that a recognisable human creative contribution can be identified: the author must have guided, selected or interpreted the system’s output.

AI is, therefore, a tool, not a co-author.

The question of the threshold for intervention remains open: is a well-formulated prompt sufficient, or is a more profound conceptual contribution required?

A useful example comes from the world of art with Refik Anadol’s work *Unsupervised*, exhibited at MoMA.<sup>3</sup> the artist selected the dataset, chose the algorithms and curated the presentation, configuring the work as an expression of direction and not mere automatic execution.

### 4. The training issue: data is not ‘free’

Another crucial issue is *text and data mining* (TDM), i.e. the use of protected works to train AI models. The new regulation establishes that data extraction is only lawful if carried out on legally accessible works and in compliance with copyright.

<sup>2</sup> CJEU, *Infopaq International A/S* (C-5/08), *Painer* (C-145/10).

<sup>3</sup> R. Anadol, *Unsupervised*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2023.

Rights holders may exercise an opt-out right, expressly excluding the use of their works in datasets intended for training AI models.<sup>4</sup>

The unauthorised use of protected works may result in **civil liability and, in serious cases, even criminal liability**, in accordance with the provisions already laid down in the Copyright Act.<sup>5</sup>

The message is clear: freedom of innovation does not equate to freedom of appropriation. However, the line between legitimate and unlawful use remains unclear, and the burden of compliance risks falling on researchers and smaller businesses, with possible dissuasive effects on innovation.

## 5. Grey areas: the test of humanity

While representing a step forward, the new legislation leaves the most complex question unresolved: how much ‘humanity’ is needed to merit protection?

In the absence of shared technical standards, proving human contribution could become an excessive burden—logs, intermediate versions, screenshots—with the risk of bureaucratising creativity.

Shared criteria and European guidelines will be needed to reconcile legal certainty and artistic freedom, ensuring that proof of humanity does not become a constraint rather than a guarantee.

## 6. Human, all too human

Law 132/2025 is not just a technical update, but a statement of principle. In the heart of the automation era, it reaffirms that creativity is a dimension of humanity—a right that arises from intellect, emotion and intention.

Technology must remain a tool, not a substitute.

The real challenge will be to implement this balance between protection, innovation and freedom of research in practice. Because even in the age of artificial intelligence, the law continues to ask itself—and us—who the author really is. ◀

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<sup>4</sup> Art. 4, Directive (EU) 2019/790, transposed by Legislative Decree 177/2021; Arts. 5 and 6, Law 132/2025.

<sup>5</sup> Arts. 171 et seq., Law No. 633 of 22 April 1941 (Copyright Law).



## Report from the Conference and International Legal Tech Competition in Lucca

Francesco Spina

The 2025 edition of “AI: Balancing Liberty, Security and Democracy”, held in Lucca on 10–11 October, reaffirmed the relevance of this annual event as a European forum for interdisciplinary and international dialogue on the implications of artificial intelligence for law, public institutions and society. Following the inaugural edition hosted last year in Trento, the Lucca conference further developed its role as a setting in which different professional communities can examine, in a constructive and forward-looking manner, the opportunities and challenges associated with technological change.

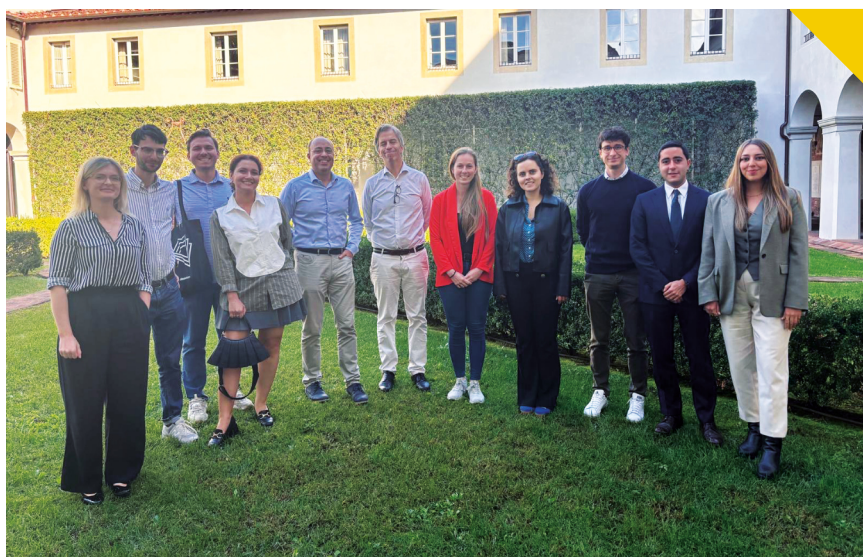
Organised by the Bar Associations of Lucca, Trento and Verona, with the support of the Fédération des Barreaux d'Europe and several institutional partners, the conference brought together 23 speakers

and moderators from across Europe. More than one hundred participants attended in person, while the bilingual livestream expanded the reach of the event; as of today, the recordings of the six thematic panels have received almost 1,000 views.

The programme covered a broad range of topics, including the use of AI in human resources and public administration, the role of Big Data in security, applications of AI in healthcare and diagnostics, creativity and copyright in the context of GenAI, environmental governance, and the interaction between technological automation and due process. What

emerged from the event was its strong capacity to promote balanced and informed dialogue among legal practitioners, academics, technologists, policy-makers and experts from various sectors.

The Lucca programme was also complemented by the announcement of the results of the FBE International LegalTech Competition, whose final was held on 9 October at the Lucca Bar Association. The ILTC—organised by three FBE Commissions, the New Technologies Commission chaired by Maria Dymitruk, the Intellectual Property Law Commission chaired by Izabela Konopacka, and the Access to Justice Commission chaired by Michele Lucherini—introduced a notable innovation compared with previous editions: a prompting-based competition. Under the official Terms and Conditions, participants were required to address a legal case study by designing and refining prompts for a GenAI tool, demonstrating the soundness of their reasoning and their ability to manage human–AI collaboration responsibly. This year’s competition stood out for the overall quality of the submissions, which showed a solid understanding of the use of AI in legal services and presented a range of innovative approaches to the challenges that AI poses to contemporary legal practice. ILTC finalists were also invited to attend the full conference programme, gaining exposure to its interdisciplinary content and engaging directly with experts and practitioners from different European Countries.





The results were announced during the conference and Martyna Mielniczuk-Skibicka, from the Bar Association of Wrocław, was awarded first place. Two special recognitions were also given, to Rafał Skibicki and Iñigo de la Puerta Zapata, for their outstanding performance. In keeping with FBE tradition, the winner will be invited to present her work at the 2026 FBE Congress in Bucharest, thereby reinforcing the connection between the competition and the broader activities of the Federation.

Following the ILTC announcements, the conference proceeded to its closing session, which featured a keynote lecture by Professor Roberto Battiston, former President of the Italian Space Agency, who offered a measured reflection on innovation, governance and democratic resilience.

Beside the invaluable contribution of the speakers and the moderators, the success of the conference owed much to the commitment of the organising committee. With Verona set to host the 2026 edition the conference continues to develop as a European platform where legal expertise, technological understanding and institutional perspectives come together to reflect on the future of AI governance and the rule of law. This ambition is further sustained by the involvement of the FBE, which helps reinforce the conference reach and its capacity to encourage dialogue across jurisdictions and professional communities. ◀





## 20 Years of FBE Human Rights support in Colombia

Professor Sara Chandler

In 2006 the FBE met in Porto, Portugal for the Spring Congress. During the General Assembly the Human Rights Commission hosted Reynaldo Villalba, a Colombia human rights lawyer. He spoke about the threats and attacks he and his colleagues were suffering. Sadly he also told us about lawyers who had been killed by para-militaries and other forces in the Colombian conflict.

Three years later members of the FBE joined the first international delegation of jurists in August 2008 who visited Colombia, meeting lawyers in Bogota, and seven regional capitals. The aim was to investigate the situation of the lawyers and to report the findings to the embassies of the delegates while there in Colombia. Vital meetings were held with the Ministry of Justice officials, and a request was made for a Human Rights commissioner for justice system, the lawyers and judges.

On our return to Europe, the Caravana delegates wrote a report which was widely disseminated. A visit to <https://www.colombiancaravana.org.uk/> will give readers all the reports of the delegation visits. From that year 2008 to 2025 there has been constant

support for human rights lawyers in Colombia. When a lawyer is at risk, urgent action is taken and a communication is made with the appropriate Minister in Colombia, including asking for protection from the National Protection Unit. which provides bodyguards and other measures. The Caravana members also lobby their own governments so that there



is a high awareness of the situation and visibility for the human rights defenders.

Some of the Caravana members join teams of trial observers including travelling to Colombia to be present in high profile trials, and since 2020 it has been possible to observe trials virtually. The FBE has been one of the prominent members of the Caravana delegations, and several former Presidents have joined, including Rod Mole, Yves Oschinsky, Dominique Attias and Sara Chandler. The President of the Human Rights Commission, Artur Wierzbicki, has been various times, as have Carles McGrath, Wout Albers, Christian di Nardo and other members of the Human Rights Commission.

Over the last 17 years the Colombia Caravana network of lawyers has had a series of achievements. Lawyers have visited prisons in Colombia, to visit human rights defenders and participate in successful campaigns for their release. Members have participated in observation of some highly significant trials, such as that entitled “The Twelve Apostles” about a gang around Santiago Uribe Velez, the brother of the former President President, charged with assassination. Over 250 visits from the lawyers in the Caravana network have benefited human rights defenders in Colombia over the years. For lawyers working in remote regions the delegation provides them with evidence that they are not forgotten and hope that the risks they experience are known to the international legal community who can do what they can to support their work.

In August 2026 the 9th international delegation of jurists will visit Chile. Any FBE member, who is interested in joining the delegation should contact the Secretary of the FBE Human Rights Commission on [sarachandler.lawsociety@gmail.com](mailto:sarachandler.lawsociety@gmail.com). ◀





## Spotlight on FBE Commissions: Legal Education Commission

**Victor Gamero-Cabo**

**T**he Legal Education Commission brings together a broad network of European bar associations and practitioners committed to strengthening legal education across jurisdictions. The Commission is chaired by the Madrid Bar Association, with the Bilbao-Biscay Bar Association as Vice-President.

The Commission is integrated by representatives from the Bilbao-Biscay Bar Association, the Warsaw Bar Association of Attorneys-at-Law, the University of Law and the City of Westminster & Holborn Law Society, the Sofia Bar Association, the Cluj Bar Association, the Spanish Council of Lawyers, the Ireland Bar Association, the Ordem dos Advogados de Portugal, the Palermo Bar Association, the Rome Bar Association, the Málaga Bar Association, the Lucca Bar Association, the Polish National Bar Council, the Madrid Bar Association and the Istanbul Bar Association.

Together, these institutions and their delegates contribute academic expertise, comparative legal insight and strong practical experience, reinforcing the Commission's mission to enhance the quality, coherence and European dimension of legal training.



## Key Achievements and Strategic Initiatives

### FBE International Contract Competition

Launched in **2022**, the *FBE International Contract Competition* has quickly become one of the flagship educational initiatives of the Legal Education Commission. Conceived as a practical, skills-oriented programme, the competition offers young lawyers from across Europe an opportunity to experience the realities of cross-border commercial negotiation in an international setting.

Since its creation, the event has been hosted in **Lisbon, Bilbao**, and most recently **Palermo**, each edition expanding participation, strengthening cooperation among member bars, and reinforcing the FBE's commitment to innovative legal training.

Designed as an immersive learning experience, the competition places participants in multinational teams tasked with negotiating and drafting a complex international contract under pressure.

The format aims to replicate real professional practice, requiring a combination of legal analysis, negotiation strategy, communication skills, teamwork and intercultural understanding. Senior practitioners serve as assessors, ensuring a rigorous and pedagogically sound process.

The **2025 edition**, hosted by the Palermo Bar Association, brought together **24 young lawyers and trainees** from **Spain, Italy, Ireland, Portugal and Romania**. Participants negotiated and drafted a cross-border commercial agreement under a demanding scenario inspired by real-life transactional challenges.

The **Palermo delegation** won the competition, while the **Irish team** received the “Best Negotiators” award, reflecting both technical proficiency and exemplary collaborative negotiation.

### FBE Internship Programme

Another major line of work of the Commission is the development of the **FBE Internship Programme**, an initiative active since **2022** and designed to promote professional mobility and practical training opportunities for young lawyers across Europe.

The programme has grown steadily and currently involves 14 participating FBE member bars: the Bar Associations of Bilbao-Biscay, Warsaw,

Verona, Palermo, Málaga, Brussels (Dutch-speaking), Cluj, Lucca, Sofia, Ireland, Portugal, Bolzano, Istanbul and Madrid. Together, these bars form a broad European network offering placements of one to three months in law firms and bar institutions, allowing young professionals to gain hands-on experience, improve their comparative legal understanding, and develop cross-border professional skills.

Building on the success of previous rounds, the FBE will launch a **new and expanded edition of the Internship Programme in 2025**, further strengthening the Federation's commitment to fostering early-career development and enhancing the European legal space.

## Looking Ahead

Through research, training initiatives, competitions and mobility programmes, the Legal Education Commission continues to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of legal education in Europe. Its work reinforces the FBE's mission to cultivate a more connected, skilled and resilient European legal community. The Commission welcomes motivated colleagues and member bars wishing to contribute to this collective effort. ◀



# THE FBE 2025: Year in Review

Izabela Konopacka

## Another Outstanding Year for the Federation of European Bars

In 2025, the Federation of European Bars (FBE) reaffirmed its role as a central European platform for professional cooperation, institutional dialogue and the defence of the rule of law. The year was marked by intense activity across Europe, with a particular focus on three major FBE Congresses—in **Palma de Mallorca, Berne and Frankfurt**—alongside sustained engagement in human rights, bar independence, innovation and inclusion. ◀

## FBE Congresses: Palma, Berne and Frankfurt as Cornerstones of 2025

The *Assises del Mediterráneo* in **Palma de Mallorca** brought together lawyers from across Europe to address legal challenges at the crossroads of real estate, tourism and family law, including inheritance and divorce in cross-border contexts. Hosted with the strong support of the Bar of the Balearic Islands and its Dean, Martín Aleñar, the congress embodied the FBE's spirit of international cooperation and practical legal dialogue rooted in real-life professional challenges.







The **FBE General Congress in Berne** represented a pivotal institutional moment for the Federation. Led by then FBE President **Marc Labbé**, the Congress gathered delegates from across Europe to engage in high-level discussions on democracy, fundamental rights and the protection of the legal profession, with particular reference to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer. During the General Assembly held in Berne, the FBE elected its new Presidency, marking a transition in leadership while ensuring continuity of the Federation's strategic direction. Michael Griem was elected President, with Rajko Maric as First Vice-President, Michele Calantropo as Second Vice-President, Bertrand Christmann as Treasurer, and Patrick A. Dillen continuing as Secretary General.



The **Autumn Congress in Frankfurt** constituted the third major FBE Congress of the year and was organised by the **Frankfurt Bar Association (Rechtsanwaltskammer Frankfurt am Main)**. The event held particular symbolic importance, as **Michael Griem, President of the FBE, also serves as Dean of the Frankfurt Bar**. The Congress featured substantive discussions on the independence of lawyers as guaranteed by the Council of Europe Convention, a dynamic Young Lawyers' session on establishing a first law firm, and a widely appreciated panel on the role of bar associations in supporting lawyers' mental health and well-being. ◀



## Solidarity with Bars and Defence of Professional Independence

Throughout 2025, the FBE repeatedly demonstrated tangible solidarity with bar associations and legal communities facing institutional pressure. A particularly strong expression of this commitment was the Federation's participation in the extraordinary **General Assembly of the Istanbul Bar Association**, attended by approximately 7,000 lawyers. The FBE was represented by its 2nd Vice-President, Rajko Maric, who conveyed the Federation's firm





support for Istanbul colleagues and reaffirmed the importance of freedom of expression, professional independence and the rule of law. During the assembly, he engaged in direct exchanges with the leadership of the Istanbul Bar Association, the Union of Turkish Bar Associations and numerous international delegations, reflecting the FBE's role as a visible and credible partner in moments of challenge. ◀

## Legal Ethics and Institutional Engagement

The **Siena Conference** on “*Legal Ethics and the European Convention on the Protection of the Profession of the Lawyer*” constituted a particularly important moment in the FBE's 2025 agenda. Held at the historic Complesso Museale Santa Maria della Scala, the conference brought together leading voices of the European legal community to examine the ethical foundations of the legal profession and the practical implications of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Profession of the Lawyer.

The presence of representatives from several Italian bar associations further reinforced institutional ties with Italian bars and regional professional bodies, underlining the FBE's commitment to close cooperation with its member organisations. ◀



## Independence of the Legal Profession: European Dialogue

The Federation also contributed to high-level European dialogue on the independence of the legal profession at the **conference hosted by the Berliner Anwaltsverein** at the European Commission Office in Berlin. The central question—*“How much independence do we need for a free legal profession?”*—framed a timely and substantive exchange among representatives of European bars and legal institutions. The FBE was represented by its First Vice-President, Rajko Maric, who joined colleagues from across Europe in discussing shared challenges, regulatory pressures and the essential role of independent lawyers in democratic societies. The conference reaffirmed the importance of strong bar associations as guardians of professional standards and fundamental rights. ◀



## Human Rights, European Values and Legal Instruments

In 2025, the Federation of European Bars sustained a visible and coherent commitment to the defence of human rights and the rule of law. In January, the Federation took part in the **Day of the Endangered Lawyer 2025** in London, hosted by the Law Society of England and Wales. The event brought together a large international audience, including Belarusian

lawyers living in exile. FBE was represented by Sara Chandler, Secretary of the FBE Human Rights Commission, who highlighted the indispensable role of lawyers in protecting fundamental rights under increasing pressure.

The Federation also played a central role within the **Ludovic Trarieux International Human Rights Prize**. The 30th edition of the Prize was awarded in Berlin to Dmitry Talantov, a Russian human rights lawyer and former President of the Udmurtia Bar, recognised for decades of courageous defence in politically sensitive cases despite repression and imprisonment. FBE was represented on the jury by Artur Wierzbicki, President of the FBE Human Rights Commission, Monique Stengel, former Treasurer of the FBE, and Dominique Attias, former FBE President. In the same framework, the Istanbul Bar Association was honoured as *Bar of the Year 2025* for its unwavering commitment to fundamental rights. The formal award ceremony took place on 13 November 2025 at the Senate of the French Republic in Paris, where the award for Mr Talantov was received on his behalf by his wife, Olga Talantov.



Concerns relating to fair trials and judicial independence beyond the European Union also remained high on the FBE agenda. During **International Fair Trials Day** in Brussels, dedicated in 2025 to the deteriorating situation in Tunisia, the Federation strongly condemned the persecution and imprisonment of lawyers, judges and journalists. FBE reiterated its calls for fair trials, respect for judicial independence and the release of political prisoners. On this occasion, the *Ebru Timtik Award* was granted to Ahmed Soab, a Tunisian lawyer currently imprisoned for his human rights activism.

The Federation's commitment to European human rights standards was further reflected at the **Congress in Sofia**, organised to mark the 75th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights. Represented by Secretary General Patrick Dillen and Treasurer Bertrand Christmann, FBE underlined the Convention's enduring relevance as a cornerstone of legal protection in Europe, while also emphasising the growing importance of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer as a key instrument for safeguarding the independence and security of the legal profession. ◀



## Major Professional Gatherings and International Visibility

FBE remained highly visible at major professional events throughout the year. The Federation proudly opened the **Trobades de Barcelona—Memorial Jacques Henry 2025**, with FBE President Marc Labbé participating alongside Rosa Peña, the then Chair of the Barcelona Bar International Committee. The event gathered distinguished representatives of international legal organisations and bar associations from across Europe, setting the stage







for high-level discussions on the challenges facing the legal profession and the defence of the rule of law.



In February 2025, the FBE participated in the **53rd European Presidents' Conference**, held in Vienna. This prestigious forum brought together presidents and senior representatives of European Bars and leading international legal organisations. The FBE contributed to discussions focused in particular on deregulation and the rule of law, alongside organisations such as the CCBE, UIA, EYBA and AIJA. The Conference offered a valuable platform for strategic exchange on the critical challenges currently facing the legal profession across Europe.

This year, the FBE Presidency once again joined the Paris Bar to celebrate the **Rentrée du Barreau de Paris at the Théâtre du Châtelet**. The ceremony brought together the legal community for an inspiring opening of the judicial year, marked by outstanding and passionate speeches delivered by the Vice-Bâtonnière, the Bâtonnier, the Minister of Justice, and two Secretaries of the Conférence. The addresses covered a wide range of themes, from the current challenges facing the profession to the traditional exercise in eloquence, which this year focused on a Chinese lawyer and a cycling doping scandal.





In accordance with long-standing tradition, on the following Saturday the FBE Presidency met with former members of the Presidency. This annual gathering provides a valuable forum to reflect on the strategic direction the Federation should pursue, with a view to honouring and preserving its strong legacy, while remaining responsive to contemporary societal realities and the expectations of the younger generation of lawyers. ◀



## **Women's Leadership, Equality and European Competitiveness**

A flagship initiative of 2025 was the **Women Leaders in Law, Business and the Public Sector Summit** in Barcelona, which powerfully reflected



the FBE's commitment to equality, inclusion and sustainable leadership. The Summit marked the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and highlighted the implementation of the Women on Boards Directive, linking international commitments with concrete regulatory progress within the European Union. The opening of the Summit was hosted by M<sup>a</sup> Eugenia Gay Rosell, Deputy Mayor of Barcelona, and benefited from the strong support of the Barcelona Bar Association (ICAB). The Summit was led by former FBE President Izabela Konopacka. The event was widely recognised for the quality of its discussions and the diversity of its high-level participants from law, business and the public sector.





FBE's work on women's leadership extended beyond its own events and into EU-level policy discussions. This was exemplified by the Federation's participation in the **EUIPO Ideas Powered for Business Network Conference in Alicante**, where Izabela Konopacka contributed to a panel on women entrepreneurship and European competitiveness. The conference brought together representatives of EU institutions, agencies and professional networks, offering a platform to showcase FBE initiatives promoting women's leadership within the legal profession and the broader innovation ecosystem. ◀

## International Partnerships, Resilience and the Human Dimension of the Profession

FBE continued to develop professional ties and institutional partnerships through targeted professional events and networking initiatives, reinforcing its role as a platform for cooperation and dialogue within the European legal community.

At the **Legal Links** event hosted by the Westminster & Holborn Law Society (WHLS), the Federation was represented by its Second Vice-President, Michele Calantropo, and Past President Izabela Konopacka. The event provided a valuable forum for collegial exchange and reflection on shared professional challenges. It also marked the 25th anniversary of the Westminster & Holborn Law Society, offering an opportunity to recognise its long-standing contribution to international legal dialogue and to further strengthen professional friendships across borders.



The Federation's role as a bridge between bars was further illustrated through the continuing partnership between the Palermo Bar Association and WHLS, following their twinning agreement signed in November 2022. In 2025, this relationship was strengthened through reciprocal engagement and a WHLS delegation visit to Palermo, reflecting active cooperation and forward planning for future joint initiatives.

Another concrete example of the FBE bringing European lawyers together is the newly established cooperation between the Bars of Vojvodina and Milan. On 11 November, both Bars signed a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at promoting the rule of law, enhancing international cooperation, and supporting the exchange of knowledge and professional experience. The Federation welcomes and encourages such initiatives, which demonstrate the vitality of the FBE network and the growing connections within it.

The human dimension of the profession also featured prominently in the Federation's activities. FBE participated in the **Cologne conference on “Resilience of Lawyers”**, where First Vice-President Rajko Marić addressed the mission of the Federation and the increasing pressures faced by lawyers across Europe. His intervention highlighted the importance of solidarity, professional independence and resilience as core values underpinning the legal profession. 🟡



## Training, Youth Engagement and Emerging Legal Topics

FBE continued to invest in education, competitions and youth engagement. **The FBE International Contract Competition 2025 in Palermo** was hosted by the Palermo Bar, celebrating excellence in contract negotiation and practical legal skills. In parallel, the Federation advanced its technology-oriented agenda through the *FBE International Legal Tech Competition (ILTC) 2025* in Lucca, held under the theme “Legal Reasoning in the Age of GenAI”, with cases spanning New Technologies Law.



Intellectual Property Law and Access to Justice, and focusing on prompt-based reasoning and ethical use of generative AI.



Human rights education also featured prominently through the **FBE Human Rights Competition 2025 in Antwerp**, challenging participants on whether the United Nations can develop an effective strategy to address current migration levels, under a jury chaired by Artur Wierzbicki with participation from Professor Sara Chandler and members of the FBE Human Rights Commission.

FBE also strengthened engagement with younger lawyers and partner organisations. President Michael Griem delivered a speech at the **European Young Bar Association (EYBA) Conference in Belfast**, emphasising the role of bar associations in supporting young lawyers and highlighting the growing cooperation between FBE and EYBA. ◀





## **FBE EVENTS 2026:** **Save the Dates**

The Fédération des Barreaux d'Europe (FBE) has the pleasure to invite all FBE bar members to take part in three major events to be held in 2026, organised jointly by the host bars and the FBE.

**We look forward to meeting you at:**

### **The Assises de la Méditerranée in Casablanca**

**16–18 April 2026**



### **The Trobades de Barcelona in Barcelona**

**7–9 May 2026**

### **The FBE General Congress in Bucharest**

**11–13 June 2026**



Bar representatives and members are warmly encouraged to save these dates and to join these events, which will provide excellent opportunities for professional dialogue, exchange of experience and strengthening co-operation within the FBE community.



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