

IBERIAN LAWYER

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Stormy weather ahead?

How the sub-prime crisis is affecting Iberia's law firms

Generation "Why?"

The problem with the youth of today

Simmons & Simmons

Finding a new direction in Iberia

Counsel at Millennium BCP

Good news behind a failed merger



A design for life

Maria Castelos, PLMJ

Although she may have once aspired to be an architect, Maria Castelos joined PLMJ direct from Universidade Católica de Lisboa in 1991 and has subsequently built a very successful career.

Completing an LLM in Banking and Finance from the University of London in 1995 led her to the firm's Banking and Finance Department where she was made a partner, aged 31.

It is an achievement she emphasises that came about with the considerable support of her family and friends. "They continue to bear with me and to love me, I hope, despite failing on them so many times because of my work."

Rewards

Maria insists however that her role brings constant rewards – her clients praise her easy nature, charm and ability to keep calm in the heat of a deal.

"It's nice to feel a client's satisfaction for having done my job well, to love and to have fun doing it, while also enjoying the opportunity to interact with so many different and interesting people."

Over the past year she led the €500 million acquisition by Babcock & Brown of a 10% stake in Brisa – Autoestradas de Portugal; as well as a number of significant project finance and concession deals, among them the Grande Lisboa Concession, Santa Maria da Feira Water Concession, North Road Concession and Penamacor Wind Farm.

Previously, she also led the team advising the originators on Europe's first concession securitisation – Project Eiffel, in 2005 – relating to construction credits in four major Portuguese road concessions; and advised on Portugal's first Shari'a law compliant real estate investment.

Maria's position and client emphasis may have changed as her career has progressed, but she has also had an impact on the nature of legal practice in Portugal.

She was previously General Counsel of the Portuguese Bar Association and was closely involved in the introduction of the recent Specialist Lawyer regime, while at PLMJ she plays an active role on the Ethics Committee, Board of Directors

and Executive Committee, and is one of the partners responsible for recruitment and training.



"The legal market has become increasingly competitive, and it now requires more from a lawyer to stay on top and succeed. In addition to being technically skilled and creative, a successful lawyer needs to be trustworthy, wise and fully dedicated to their clients," she says.

