



Awards Summary

In June 2026 the Women in Business Law Awards will present the winners of the 2026 Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) awards, celebrating ground-breaking achievements by the region's leading female lawyers and the most progressive law firms in the field of gender policies, advocacy, and support of women in law.

The Women in Business Law Awards is a part of the Legal Benchmarking Group. The awards, in partnership with The Lawyer, are adjudicated by a dedicated team that works alongside a range of titles including [Benchmark Litigation](#), [IFLR](#), [ITR](#) and [Managing IP](#). The team combines expertise in specialist areas of law with years of experience in reviewing policies and initiatives that promote women in law.

For any information about the awards please contact WiBL@legalbenchmarkinggroup.com

Your key contacts are James Wilson, Director of Research EMEA, and Tatiana Hlivka, Head of Lawyer Accreditation

Methodology

The Women in Business Law Awards celebrates the efforts and achievements of law and professional services firms across the EMEA region in helping women to advance in and thrive at the top of the legal profession. It also strives to shine a spotlight on the most impressive achievements by women lawyers during the review period. Awards will be presented to private practice individuals, law firms and teams, and in-house teams and lawyers.

Law firms and in-house teams are invited to make written entries detailing their gender employee statistics and their women-friendly working practices and policies, as well as biographical information about their leading female lawyers.

A dedicated research team will review the written entries and at its discretion conduct interviews with market practitioners. The team may also incorporate research from sister brands mentioned above, including relevant research and market intelligence.

Deadline

All entries must be uploaded to the [AWARDS PORTAL](#) by **February 16 2026**.

Judging process

Final decisions will be made by the Women in Business Law Awards team following an extensive research process. Decisions are entirely independent and based solely on the quality and impact of the work and projects that have been detailed.

Note: We reserve the right to expand or limit awards categories

Awards are judged internally with the involvement of a cross-departmental panel, which panel spans Legal Benchmarking Group's different brands and functions at various levels of seniority.

Individual winners are judged on their professional accomplishments as well as their advocacy and influence within their fields between January 1 to December 31 of the preceding year. We try to assess an individual's leadership, mentorship and influence.

Firm and jurisdictional winners are judged on how they support the development of women in the legal profession and the strength of work/life programmes which enable women to pursue legal careers to the very highest levels. Criteria include the ratio of female-to-male lawyers (at all levels of seniority), the retention of women associates to partner level and diversity initiatives.

We recommend that firms focus on the Firm Awards – Project Initiatives entries as these will automatically support jurisdictional firm awards.

Award Categories

Firm of the Year

The firm awards will recognise the best law firms in the following categories:

- Career Development Firm of the Year
- Intersectional Diversity Firm of the Year (formerly Diverse Women Advocacy Firm of the Year)
- Gender diversity Firm of the Year
- Pro bono Firm of the Year
- Work-Life Balance Firm of the Year
- Innovative Firm of the Year
- Women In Business Law Firm of the Year *

In awarding, categories will be split by International Firms and National / Jurisdictional Firms.

We invite firms to nominate themselves using a dedicated **Firm of the Year** entry form.

*Women in Business Law Firm of the Year award

There is no entry form for this award. Firms will be shortlisted and awarded based on the evidence submitted across all categories. The award will be split between International Firms and National Firms. For International law firms, the judges will look at the design and implementation of multi-jurisdictional programmes and their roll-out, impact and success. For National firms, judges will consider how the office is leading the way in the national legal market.

Lawyer of the Year – Practice Area

The lawyer of the year awards will be based on the role an individual played on influential deals/cases AND their advocacy, influence and thought leadership during the period. Individuals are recognised within the practice area where they operate. Candidates should be nominated via the **Lawyer of the Year – Practice Area** entry form.

The key metrics are:

- **Professional accomplishments:** lead roles on standout cases and/or deals from the preceding calendar year

Note: We reserve the right to expand or limit awards categories

- **Advocacy:** projects that demonstrate the nominee’s advocacy for women in the legal profession, outside of direct client, transactional and case work – this should be formal positions or roles within the legal industry or business community, or within roles of advocacy
- **Influence:** evidence of decision-making and leadership which have resulted in positive change for women in the legal profession within and external to the firm – this is a look at impact and results
- **Thought leadership:** professional creativity and thought leadership, including through publications, speaking engagements and involvement in ESG activities that occurred during the research period – this is work that is informing the thinking around gender topics

These awards will recognise the best of the best in the following categories:

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| • Antitrust & competition | • M&A |
| • Aviation | • Patent |
| • Banking & finance | • Privacy & data protection |
| • Commercial arbitration | • Private client & wealth management |
| • Copyright | • Private equity (incl. venture capital) |
| • Corporate Governance | • Product liability |
| • Debt Capital Markets | • Project finance |
| • Energy, natural resources & mining | • Real estate |
| • Environment | • Restructuring & insolvency |
| • Equity Capital Markets | • Shipping & maritime |
| • Financial regulation | • Structured finance & securitisation |
| • Insurance & reinsurance | • Tax |
| • International trade | • Tax disputes |
| • Investment funds | • Technology, Media and Telecoms |
| • Labour & employment | • Trademark |
| • Life sciences | • Transfer pricing |
| • Litigation | • White collar crime |

Spotlight Awards: Thought Leaders, ESG Leaders, Outstanding Achievement

These categories will be based on the Thought Leadership and ESG Leadership nominations made via the **Individual Award – Spotlight Award** entry form. The awards aim to recognise those individuals that are engaged in the most impactful work in pursuing thought leadership opportunities and ESG advocacy.

The awards will recognise winners in the following categories:

- **Thought Leader of the Year** – we will look at how an individual has defined, led and shaped the field of their practice area
- **ESG Leader of the Year** – we will consider achievements across ESG broadly, focusing on women who are leading the way in ESG programmes, client support and/or how ESG goals are embedded within transactions/cases

Note: We reserve the right to expand or limit awards categories

- **Outstanding Achievement Award** – judges will consider an individual’s record over the years and their position as a role model to the industry through excelling in their practice area and advocating from women in law

Rising Stars

A rising star must have under 15 years of professional experience and be undertaking responsibilities that might usually be seen at partner level. Nominations should be made using the **Rising Stars** entry form.

Rising star lawyers will be awarded in the following categories:

- Arbitration
- Banking & finance
- Corporate/M&A
- Intellectual property
- Litigation
- Tax

In-House Awards

In-house teams and individuals should be nominated via the **In-House Awards** entry form. In-house awards will be awarded for:

- General Counsel
- In-House Rising Star
- In-House Team

The awards will be based on leadership in the industry in supporting and promoting women in law.

Jurisdictional Firm of the Year

Jurisdictional firm of the year awards will be based primarily on the evidence of firm initiatives and demographics. Entries must be made directly via the **Jurisdictional Firm of the Year** forms. Entries to the Firm Awards – Project Initiatives will automatically be considered within the evaluation for jurisdictional firm of the year, so there is no need to repeat initiatives

The evaluation will focus on the impact and innovation of initiatives and the gender balance within the firm at all levels of seniority. Jurisdictional firm of the year will be awarded for the following jurisdictions:

- Africa
- Austria
- Baltics
- Benelux
- Central Europe
- Eastern Europe
- France
- Germany
- Ireland
- Israel
- Italy
- MENA
- Poland
- Portugal
- Saudi Arabia
- Scandinavia
- South-East Europe
- Spain
- Switzerland
- United Arab Emirates
- Ukraine
- United Kingdom

Note: We reserve the right to expand or limit awards categories

Regional jurisdictions such as Africa or Benelux may be broken down to reflect quality and quantity of entries.

Definitions

Firm Awards

Career Development

- Mentoring, sponsorship, coaching and talent management
 - A mentor is a guide for you to get to your goals on your own
 - A sponsor actively tries to get you promoted
 - A coach is usually external to the company and sits with you one-on-one
- Recruiting, retaining, promoting and training initiatives
- Leadership development programs
- Other initiatives that find ways of hiring more women associates (ie novel advertising campaigns or programmes for lateral hires)

Intersectional Diversity (formerly Diverse Women Lawyers category)

- While the title of this category has changed, the criteria remains the same
- Support for women from diverse backgrounds, including race, LGBTQ, disability, social mobility, etc.
- Programmes, groups, or initiatives that integrate gender with other dimensions of diversity

Gender Diversity Support

- Groups and networks (women's groups with alumni, partners and clients present)
- Gender-based events that promote visibility, connection, and empowerment
- Initiatives and impact by women's groups/networks within respective firms or within external networks

Pro Bono

- Pro bono work that supports women's rights and working conditions
- Social / community engagement programmes where the work is relevant to women and gender diversity issues
- Legal work involving disadvantaged women, access to justice and fair treatment

Work-Life Balance

- Flexible working, maternity leave and groups for parents etc. at law firms (affinity groups)
- Maternity and transition coaching
- Childcare and any other innovative initiatives that support work-life balance

Innovation

- It can include projects that fall into any or all other firm categories, with the exclusive criterion being innovation

Note: We reserve the right to expand or limit awards categories

- We look for interesting, new initiatives that are in the pipeline or recently launched
- Evidence that impact is being made

Individual Awards

Advocacy

- The ways in which the nominee has advocated for women in the legal industry
- Mentorship, sponsorship, being a part of or leading groups that promote women in law

Influence

- The extent to which the nominee has influenced policy and change within or external to the firm for the promotion of women in the legal industry

Thought Leadership

- Examples of thought leadership activities, such as publishing articles or books, speaking engagements, panel memberships, within the nominee's practice area specialism or in reference to supporting women in law

ESG Leadership

- Examples of engagement and leadership in ESG initiatives and advocacy work:
 - **Environmental** – waste and pollution, resource depletion, greenhouse gas emission, deforestation, climate change issues, biodiversity
 - **Social** – employee relations and diversity (including and beyond what is requested regarding women under the advocacy and influence sections), working conditions, conflict, and local communities
 - **Governance** – which includes executive remuneration, donations and political lobbying, corruption, and bribery, as well as board diversity and structure

Outstanding Achievement

Recognises exceptional accomplishments, whether through career achievements, major contributions to the legal community, or transformative work that has set new standards for women in the industry. Judges will consider impact and dedication.

In-House Awards

In-House Team

- Team awards recognises the teams for their contributions to business engagement, inclusion of new technologies, development of new specialisms within the team, the growth in team size, the relationship with the CEO, and engagement with the executive and around the company

In-House Rising Star

- Individual awards recognize the individual for their contributions and role on impactful work, as well as their advocacy for women in business law

Note: We reserve the right to expand or limit awards categories

- A nominee must have under 15 years of professional experience and be undertaking responsibilities that might usually be seen at senior level
- An In-House Rising Star is considered an emerging professional with demonstrable talent, potential, and achievement early in their career

General Counsel

- General counsel awards recognise the best woman general counsels for their work in business enabling and thought leadership