

UOC

“Universities must spearhead the 2030 Agenda”

Inaugural lecture 2019/2020

Interview between Cristina Gallach, the Spanish Government’s High Commissioner for the 2030 Agenda, and **Raquel Xalabarder**, Dean of the UOC’s Faculty of Law and Political Science.

Madrid, 3 September 2019
Gardens of the Moncloa Palace

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Universitat Oberta
de Catalunya

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Introduction

01



Dear all,

The late Stephen Hawking told us that only empathy can save humanity. This ability to put ourselves in other people's place affects our everyday life, but even more so the future; it entails the search for better horizons so that future generations can inherit a world where there are more possibilities, fairness and hope. This may explain why, in times of extreme difficulty, initiatives appear that shift our focus away from everyday life, towards what may await us in the years ahead. Take for example the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948 in a post-war world rife with divisions. A little over half a century later, with the world suffering from other, more recent crises, the United Nations put forward its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), packaged together in what it named the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This new and improved universal declaration is a call to arms for us all; as a society in general but also specifically for us as a university. The SDGs offer us a shared playing field, a set of interconnected work plans, and aspirations for a better future. In this year's inaugural lecture, Cristina Gallach, the Spanish Government's High Commissioner for the 2030 Agenda, re-emphasizes the significance of a "common language" and the massive opportunity to "mark a change in the complex situation in which today's world finds itself".

The UOC's adoption of the 2030 Agenda is in perfect agreement with the University's essential characteristics. In particular, it contributes to the fulfilment of our mission: to prioritize education and research, to respond to social needs, to stimulate talent, and to promote and

unite knowledge. Universities are no longer the rigid institutions of yesteryear, in which people educated in bygone eras were charged with instructing those who were to decide the future – a peculiar intersection between the ages. Today's universities are more porous, more cross-functional, more disruptive and more necessary; we can attribute this to factors such as the growing importance of lifelong learning, continuing evolutions in the courses taught and in demand, and the emergence of new teaching methods, technologies and organizational models.

Making the 2030 Agenda part of our teaching, our research, our internal procedures and all areas of the UOC is a commitment that is in keeping with our vocation, our duty of care for the present moment and our goals for the future. We are both rooted in our surroundings – be that Sant Quirze de Besora for Cristina Gallach or Avinguda del Tibidabo in Barcelona for the UOC – and connected worldwide, part of a shared tomorrow. We have not chosen the easy route, but as Professor Mary Beard from the University of Cambridge has said, the role of academics is to show how everything is not so simple, but rather more complicated. Similarly, the goals set by the 2030 Agenda are ambitious, but what is at stake is the future for generations to come. It's no small matter!

Have an excellent academic year 2019/2020!

Josep A. Planell
UOC President

“Universities must spearhead the 2030 Agenda”

U2



The UOC begins the academic year 2019/2020 with its traditional inaugural lecture. As per previous years, this is a chance for the university community to begin the semester by engaging in reflection and debate. On this occasion we spoke with the Spanish Government’s High Commissioner for the 2030 Agenda, **Cristina Gallach**, about the challenges we face as a global society.

The interview was conducted by the dean of the UOC’s Faculty of Law and Political Science, **Raquel Xalabarder**, who asked Gallach about the 2030 Agenda’s targets, the 17 goals that represent an agreement between 193 countries to work together on combating the environmental, social and economic inequities globalization has brought to the fore.

This inaugural lecture with Cristina Gallach highlights the need for collaborations to achieve a better future, and the fact that universities must play a central part in our global transformations.

In these pages you will find both the video and a transcription of the interview between Cristina Gallach and Raquel Xalabarder.



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“It was the agreement reached between 193 countries.”

“The political action of governments, the institutions in each country, and citizens should adopt and press this Agenda.”

“It’s very important that we bear in mind the special role played by citizens, especially new generations, who realize that the world they are inheriting is not what they want or deserve to inherit.”

“25 September 2015 is a very important date, because it’s the day when the 2030 Agenda was launched and agreed on. Now I think we’re at a stage, above all, of making the accelerators visible, which is what will ensure we achieve our goals.”

“We’ve managed to turn an image that was created in 2015 into an international global image.”

“This Agenda is an agenda for learning; it’s about transmitting this learning, using science and innovation, which are two major instruments for change.”

“It’s essential for universities to feel that this Agenda is their own, to analyse, study how to participate, to convey it to their research teams, their population, who are mostly young people who yearn for these changes, and to mobilize them.”

Video



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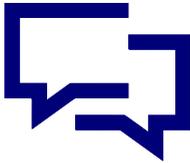
Dossier

Selection of links and content relating to Cristina Gallach, put together by the UOC Library:

biblioteca.uoc.edu/en/resources/cristina-gallach-inaugural-lecture-2019-2020

The conversation

04



Cristina Gallach

High Commissioner for the 2030 Agenda

Raquel Xalabarder

Dean of the UOC's Faculty of Law and Political Science



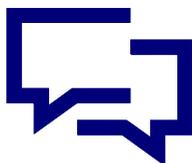
R. X.: Cristina, thank you for inviting us to the delightful complex of La Moncloa, where you are the Spanish Government's High Commissioner for the 2030 Agenda.

C. G.: Yes, it's a splendid place. Here we are in the gardens. And it's a very bright day today, and I think for the High Commissioner's Office – which is small but has quite a far-reaching mission – being based here gives us a boost and also conveys a very important commitment, because we are working directly with the President of the Government, with all the ministries, and we are trying to mobilize all government agencies (central government, but also regional and municipal governments) as well as all of civil society.

And the ability to do this from La Moncloa, the centre of government, we feel and hope will give a boost to efficacy and specific actions. It's also a very pleasant and attractive place and gives the impression of getting a message across, that the will is there to carry out the necessary transformations.

R. X.: It does indeed highlight the 2030 Agenda's importance...

C. G.: Absolutely. I think the Spanish Government is one of the few that has decided to set up a High Commission next to the Presidency. Other countries have opted for a different form of governance. But the usefulness of this model's structure is seen as being increasingly useful, able to mobilize many things and decisions across departments, which can really only be done through the hub of the Presidency.

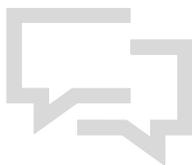


R. X.: Cristina was previously United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, before which she was senior communications advisor to the NATO General Secretary and to the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union. It is a pleasure to have you here with us. Welcome.

C. G.: Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to share such an important moment for the UOC and its students. Thank you for having me.

R. X.: At the UOC we are fully aware of what the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) mean. We're carrying out a number of related actions from the University's Office of the President and the different vice-presidents' offices, but we are particularly pleased to have you here with us, because you, Cristina, and the UOC have something in common. I would say we are citizens of the world, but born in Catalonia. How do you see this?

C. G.: It's true, I feel like a citizen of the world due to both my professional and personal experiences. I've had close ties to many places, but my origins are deeply rooted. I feel, as you say, that I'm from Catalonia, a very specific part of Catalonia, and I've always wanted to take Catalonia with me wherever I go, even here in Madrid. And, as you said, I understand that the UOC – which I've got to know better this year – from what you mentioned regarding the firm commitment of the faculty, the Office of the President and the students themselves, is a



university that has had a major impact on Catalonia and the world, giving courses in a way that's very different from most other universities.

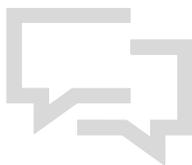
R. X.: That's right. At the UOC we've been doing this for over 20 years, and we'll soon be celebrating 25 years, and the world changes with us. Universities change with the world and the UOC is a good example of this.

But let's start by talking about the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. What is the 2030 Agenda? And what is your mission? What do you aim to do as High Commissioner?

C. G.: Well, the Agenda is a lot of things all at once. First of all, it's a major global plan, for the whole planet, to tackle the many problems caused by globalization: environmental, social and economic.

It is also an ambitious vision of how we want the world to be in 2030 for the thousands, millions of inhabitants that require and yearn for a much better space to live in. In addition, it's a way of organizing ourselves to achieve longed-for socioeconomic conditions.

And, finally, I would say it's a common language, because the way it's organized – establishing challenges, analyses and actions – enables us to talk to one another – whether we are politicians, economists, university lecturers or students – in a way we can all understand. Thus it's a lot of things rolled into one. I think it's an opportunity to mark a change in the complex situation in which today's world finds itself.



R. X.: What is the challenge facing Spain, what proposals are there or what homework does Spain need to do to meet these goals?

C. G.: Well, we have a lot of homework to do. Spain is a country with some fantastic things about it, such as life expectancy, health services and good quality of life. But it faces a major challenge in that we've left some people behind, because of work-related factors or because they are living in poverty, and we live in a changing world with major technological challenges (innovation and all its challenges).

So Spain believes this Agenda will help organize the work to be done on public policies, which must be made effective at all levels, and mobilize the necessary resources to bring about change. So despite Spain's high level of development, we also understand our considerable deficiencies and various major environmental problems, water for example. We, like many other countries, are affected by climate change, possibly more seriously due to the challenges we face in terms of desertification, etc.

We want this Agenda to be our guide and our framework for action. And it's the High Commissioner's job to coordinate this work so we can tackle these challenges and actions effectively, to ensure we are properly organized and accountable to the public with regard to what we do.

Video

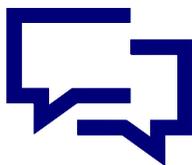


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Key ideas

“First of all it’s a major global plan, for the whole planet, to tackle the many problems caused by globalization: environmental, social and economic. But it’s also an ambitious vision of how we want the world to be in 2030 for the thousands, millions of inhabitants that require and yearn for a much better space to live in. In addition, it’s a way of organizing ourselves to achieve longed-for socioeconomic improvements.”

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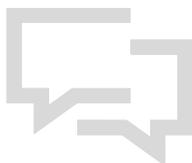


R. X.: The 2030 Agenda includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Is there one you would highlight? Are some more important than others? How were these 17 agreed on?

C. G.: Well, there are 17 by political consensus. There could have been 10 if they had been organized differently, but I remember very clearly, when I worked at the United Nations, that we needed to reach a political consensus: some preferred 10, 5 or 20 to provide a clear numerical road map, but in the end the number was 17 because this was the agreement reached between 193 countries, something quite spectacular.

What is clear is that these 17 cover all areas related to the planet: preserving our environment, all areas related to people, and they drive towards peace and prosperity. They also cover what we call the methodology, how we can achieve this transformation: through partnerships, Goal 17.

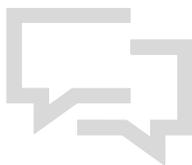
It is the first time that the whole international community – led, as it should be, by the United Nations, the multilateral organization par excellence – has presented a major plan for transformation. And when you look at it in detail, you realize the scale of the change and effort required, and that no matter whether a country is more advanced – eg Norway or Spain – or less advanced – certain African countries or countries at war or in crisis – all must advance and make progress towards each of the goals.



R. X.: It's also complicated, because you could argue that some of the goals are difficult to combine. Some might even be considered incompatible. How should countries meet this challenge? What can countries – and particularly developing countries – do to somehow balance them? To not have to choose one over the other...

C. G.: You've made a very important point. It may be that, if seeking to achieve a certain goal, for example the *Decent work* goal, the application of environmental protection measures could initially block job opportunities. But what's clear is that the combination of all of them leads to a general framework of well-being, inclusion and protection of the planet. So these contradictions have to be overcome, and they will differ depending on where you are; depending on whether you're in an advanced country, in a very stable socioeconomic space, or in a country coming out of crisis or terribly affected by climate change.

This is where political action comes in. Political action by governments, the institutions in each country, and by citizens, who should be adopting and pressing this Agenda to ensure each government finds ways to apply it in accordance with their needs. What we have to do in Spain differs from the United Kingdom, for instance; what has to be done in the USA differs from what its neighbour, Mexico, has to do.

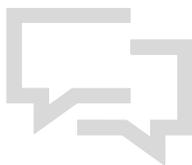


So it's a combination of our political leaders' audacity and know-how, citizens' demands to adopt the necessary policies, and large-scale social mobilization. I think it's also very important that we bear in mind the special role played by citizens, especially new generations, who realize that the world they are inheriting is not what they want or deserve to inherit. A great deal of pressure needs be generated to ensure that every effort required to achieve these goals is made. A combination, as I've said, of public policy and private sector action, where universities, science, innovation and technology each play a very important role.

R. X.: Listening to you, I imagine it's a bit like an intergenerational social contract, which should serve as a guide for everyone, from politicians to universities...

C. G.: Well, you've summarized it perfectly. The phrase social contract... We all think about Rousseau's social contract, but it was a social contract for the first world, if you will, for the world that affected us then, a world which thought it mattered, as it were. Now we require a universal social contract.

You also mentioned another key word, intergenerational. In the last 30 to 40 years, we've developed at a staggering pace but, in the end, the planet has paid the price, and if we continue at this rate, fine, but we'll leave no space for future generations. And future generations – just as we received from our parents, our ancestors – have every right to receive a place they can live in, and an effective socioeconomic organization.



So a social contract, an intergenerational pact, with a truly ethical vision of the future and greater sense of responsibility compared to the past, I think is a very good – even exciting – way to understand this Agenda, which is a plan based on positive thinking. Generally, international organizations give us plans, strict treaties, which have to be met, as this one must be. But it's not a treaty, it's an agreement, a positive one. It is a formulation of achievable ambition.

Video



youtu.be/8YZ-wvNpvAI

Key ideas

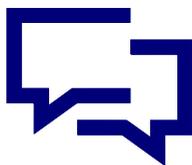
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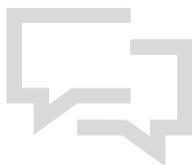
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R. X.: The 2030 Agenda was published, if I remember rightly, about four years ago. You were with the United Nations then, as head of communication, and you talked about this process of how to identify the SDGs. I think one of the successes in facilitating this dialogue is the iconography, the visualization. Did you take part in this? Were you responsible for it too?

C. G.: Indeed, yes. Well, I'd like to say two things on this point. One, 25 September is a very important date, because it's the day when the 2030 Agenda was launched and agreed on: 25 September 2015. So it's the anniversary, and it's good to mark it each year, note that there's one year less to go, that the road is a long one, and we should underline the efforts made. And now I think we're at a stage, above all, of making the accelerators visible, which is what will ensure we achieve our goals. And you're absolutely right about communication, because many people see this 2030 Agenda as an exercise in mobilization, conducted through communication.

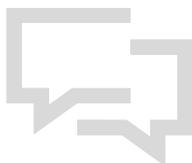
I clearly remember, when the political pact led us to the 17 Goals, the then Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who I worked very closely and very happily with, said to me, well, let's see how we get this across, because it could just seem like waffle. How do we create a global image with which to identify the Agenda? And then we started working on various ideas.



I have to admit that the United Nations is short on resources, as was our department. Therefore we had to turn to a philanthropist, one who is a great communicator, and who helped us identify a team of people who really provided great support in the design. And I believe we made the right move in having the Secretary-General himself ask the whole system – agencies, funds, programmes, the whole UN family –, he asked them (or perhaps insisted) that they adopt the brand, and for it to be the only brand for this sustainable transformational development.

Consequently, Member States also came on board, as well as most governments, Spain very much so, joining what we call the circle, a wheel that is elegant, attractive, identifiable, dynamic and diverse. The planet is very diverse and there are many issues to tackle, so the image helps and, additionally, smaller images have been designed for the different goals. In my opinion, we've managed to turn an image that was created in 2015 into an international global image, and we are very glad that people like it.

R. X.: And the truth is, well, do you remember last year's inaugural lecture? Cristina de Middel spoke to us about how literacy in the 21st century involves image, the importance of the image, right? And in this context, this is a success, one of the important elements to develop.



C. G.: You're right. We on the High Commission team are currently working on an *adopt the SDGs* campaign, called #ODSéate. Above all, it encourages participation, joining the circle, adding the circle to your daily life, your work, your teams, your vision, and feeling part of this transformational movement.

R. X.: This is the challenge and work of the High Commission.

C. G.: Yes. That's it.

Video

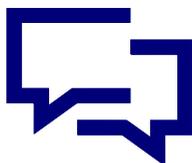


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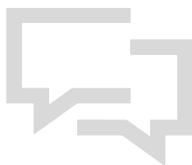


R. X.: I'd like now to talk about the role of universities. You mentioned the importance of involving all parties; politicians, but also the very important part that universities have to play. At the UOC, we feel especially connected to all the Sustainable Development Goals, both with regard to education and training programmes (such as research and open access) and the transfer of knowledge generated in universities to society. How do you see the role of universities, or a university like the UOC, which overcomes distance to contribute to this Agenda?

C. G.: I believe they have a key role because this Agenda is an agenda for learning, as you said; it's about transmitting this learning, using science and innovation, which are two major instruments for change, and applying it to learning and change processes.

When we speak to the people who worked hard on the Millennium Goals, experts in less-advanced countries' development, we always stress that probably the biggest lever that makes us feel comfortable when saying the goals will be achieved is innovation and research; and this is work that takes place in universities.

Therefore, it's essential for universities to feel that this Agenda is their own, to analyse, study how to participate, convey it to their research teams, their population, who are mostly young people who yearn for these changes, and mobilize them. In my opinion, this is true both from



the inspirational, visionary point of view and also the more specific point of view; it's scientific research that is going to change the world, and universities have to lead.

I believe that the movement that led to the design of the SDGs involved significant participation from civil society, including many universities. At one of the centres much involved at the beginning, Ban Ki-moon had an important advisor on these topics, Professor Jeffrey Sachs, a great university professor, and I believe networks and studies such as his and the ones you're working on at the UOC are key.

We never tire of talking to universities and to their presidents, members of the Spanish Rectors' Conference, who are increasingly coming on board. And I must say that we never tire of seeing, with admiration and satisfaction, how the SDGs are becoming embedded in the fabric of universities: faculty, planning and, above all, students. I believe we have only just touched on some aspects, that the potential is still there for mobilization, both in educational programmes and educational processes, and in specific subjects, and our planet will be sustainable if future citizens understand the scale of this word, which is where universities come in.

Video



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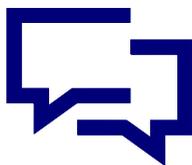
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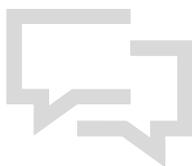
R. X.: From your CV I see that you also have personal experience as an entrepreneur. You started or co-founded *El 9 Nou*, which is one of the newspapers that I, coming from El Vallès, read and greatly appreciate.

C. G.: You're taking me back 40 years, because, it's true, this newspaper turned 40 last year. Well, it was an interesting experience, undoubtedly the product of the political situation in Spain, Catalonia, and the transition to democracy. It was the post-Franco era. I was a journalism student. As journalism students, we were convinced that we had to mobilize the media, so a group of us who were at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and were from the region of Osona joined up; we organized to create and found a newspaper.

We offered subscriptions, what is now known as crowdfunding, for 1,000 pesetas, which was a lot of money then, and for 100. It was a very, very interesting project. Now, as you said, I'm proud that it's become a key element in communication in a region of Catalonia for which I have a special fondness.

I believe that entrepreneurship is very much a part of the 2030 Agenda. Starting, feeling supported, but knowing that no transformation can be made without risk.

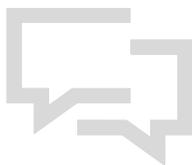
But I do think the idea of entrepreneurship is very important, and I applaud the fact that the UOC's vision includes teaching entrepreneurship to young people in its mission. Without these people who risk a little more,



progress would be impossible. And it's also important to teach people – which is why I think it's great the UOC does this – to take paths that bring us face to face with new situations.

R. X.: Your career is impressive. If I may, I'd now like to ask a more personal question: how did a girl from Sant Quirze de Besora manage to end up in these three emblematic institutions – the United Nations, the European Union and NATO – and recently become High Commissioner for the 2030 Agenda and take on this responsibility? What recommendations would you give to our students? How can they go out and make their mark in the world?

C. G.: I can only say that I've been curious and committed my whole life. I've always wanted to seek knowledge and to show commitment, to change and improve, and the start of my journalism career was just that, with the experience we just mentioned. And I was also very curious about what was happening internationally; I always liked international journalism. I looked for a grant to study international relations, to discover more of the world; and I got it. I had the wonderful opportunity of studying with international professors, such as Zbigniew Brzezinski in the 1980s at Columbia University. And, well, I've always felt very local and very international at the same time. I'm also grateful, not only for the opportunities I've had – the grant was one, from "la Caixa", Fulbright – but also for my colleagues, my bosses, to whom I owe so much. I believe that there



is a basic formula: you have to work hard, and you have to work hard every day of the week and every hour of the day.

R. X.: And we could go on talking for much longer, couldn't we?

C. G.: My wish for 2019, for the 2019/2020 academic year, is for it to be a great year for sustainability, for the UOC and all universities, and that we all are energized into starting a period of action and execution of the Agenda. My thanks to the UOC for their commitment to it. Thank you.

R. X.: Thank you, Cristina.

Video



youtu.be/ibLmvk11o7s

Key ideas

“I’ve been curious and committed my whole life. I’ve always wanted to seek knowledge and to show commitment, to change and improve, and the start of my journalism career was just that.”

“I think the idea of entrepreneurship is very important, and I applaud the fact that the UOC’s vision includes teaching entrepreneurship to young people in its mission. Without these people who risk a little more, progress would be impossible. And it’s also important to teach people – which is why I think it’s great the UOC does this – to take paths that bring us face to face with new situations.”

Cristina Gallach

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Cristina Gallach has been the Spanish Government's High Commissioner for the 2030 Agenda since July 2018, a role in which she is responsible for coordinating the country's implementation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Her extensive professional experience is rooted in the fields of communication, international relations, security, defence, and development policies. She is closely acquainted with EU institutions, and joined the Council of the European Union in 1999. Furthermore she is the only woman from Spain to have occupied high-ranking positions in all three of the major international organizations: the EU, the UN and NATO.

She is passionate about gender equality and the promotion of diversity and inclusion in EU institutions, having reached a higher position within the United Nations than any Spanish woman before her when she was appointed as a head of department, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information. She also specializes in communications relating to security, defence and crises.

She has been commended for her work as a mentor of young professionals at various NGOs, in particular Brussels-based Women in International Security, of which she was appointed president. In Spain she collaborates with various private foundations, as a trustee of both Novia Salcedo (Bilbao) and Ernest Lluch, and with the Cercle d'Economia institution in Barcelona.

Raquel Xalabarder



Raquel Xalabarder is a professor of intellectual property law and dean of the UOC's Faculty of Law and Political Science. She was also assistant director to the Vice President for Faculty and Academic Organization (November 2008–September 2013) and director of the law degree programme (February 2002–September 2007). She is coordinator of the UOC's Internet Law research group.

She has a law degree from the University of Barcelona (1988); a Master of Laws degree from Columbia University Law School, New York (1992–1993); and a Doctorate in Law (cum laude), with her thesis on “The international protection of audiovisual works. Questions related to authorship”, from the University of Barcelona (1997). She was a visiting scholar at Columbia University Law School, New York (2000–2001) and *Honorarvertrag* at the Max Planck Institute for Intellectual Property, Munich (2008 and 2011). Since 2000 she has been a tutor for courses run by the World Intellectual Property Organization Academy.

She is chair of ALADDA, the Spanish Literary and Artistic Copyright Defence Association (aladda.es), a member of ALAI, the International Literary and Artistic Association (www.alai.org), treasurer of ATRIP, the International Association for the Advancement of Teaching and Research in Intellectual Property (atrip.org) and a member of ECS, the European Copyright Society (europeancopyrightsociety.org). She is also a substitute member of the Spanish Ministry of Culture's intellectual property commission (first section).

She has extensive experience teaching and publishing in the fields of intellectual property law, private international law and internet law. She has been invited as an expert speaker to the principal events in these fields, both in Spain and internationally.

[Raquel Xalabarder's UOC CV](#)

Recommendation for citations



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