



BEATRIZ LIMA, SARA NAZARÉ, JOANA PIRIQUITO SANTOS

NLP, women at the helm

Led by three experienced lawyers, this Lisbon-based firm specializes in patent litigation and strategic IP consulting, aiming to set new standards in the European market

by glória paiva

A boutique law firm led by three women, specializing in an increasingly valued niche within the business world. One of the newest and boldest ventures in the Portuguese legal market is formed by **Sara Nazaré, Beatriz Lima, and Joana Piriquito Santos**, three lawyers under the age of 40 who work in the field of Intellectual Property. With the initials of their last names, **NLP Legal** was born from the founding partners' desire to create their own innovative project, based on the growing importance of the subject and the strength of their expertise.

Lima, Santos and Nazaré met at **Vieira de Almeida**, where they built part of their 15 years of experience each in the sector. “We were often competing for the same positions, but instead of driving us apart, it brought us closer. There was a mutual admiration that remains at the core of NLP’s foundation”, says Santos, who, in addition to being a lawyer, is a pharmacist, which explains her specialization in pharmaceutical patents. The other founding partners, in turn, have complementary profiles: Lima has handled patent litigation cases in areas such as pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, utility models, and designs. Nazaré, on her side, coordinated the intellectual property area at VdA for five years and also managed patent litigation in various fields, as well as trademark and design cases.

INAUGURATING THE UPC IN LISBON

NLP Legal opened its doors a year ago and has already started making a name for itself in the market, earning recognition from clients and peers both within and outside Portugal. In its first year of operation, it became the first law firm to represent a client before the Unified Patent Court (UPC) in the Lisbon local division—ASUS, in a preliminary injunction case. In handling this case, NLP partnered with the international law firm **Powell Gilbert**. In just its first year, NLP has already built a robust client portfolio, including Bayer, Novartis, Biogen, Edwards, and Bristol Myers

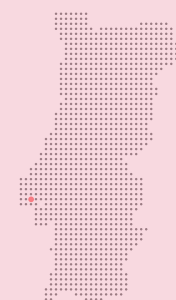


«If we can be a reference for younger generations and contribute to values like inclusion and diversity, that alone is something to be proud of»

Beatriz Lima

ABOUT NLP LEGAL

- **YEAR OF FOUNDING:**
2024
- **FIRST MAJOR CLIENTS:**
ASUS, Bayer, Novartis, Biogen, Edwards, Bristol Myers Squibb
- **FIRST CASE BEFORE THE UNIFIED PATENT COURT (UPC)**
- **AREAS COVERED:**
 - Litigation and Pre-litigation
 - Transactional IP
 - Strategic IP consulting





«IP rights are a factor that can determine the success or failure of a business»

Joana Piriquito Santos

Squibb. The founding partners state that their initial expectations have already been surpassed, both in terms of growth and client acquisition, with most of their clients being international companies in need of patent litigation and arbitration services, something the founders were already familiar with. “For large clients, especially in the pharmaceutical sector, the Portuguese market is just one among many. That’s why there is a significant need for coordination with foreign firms. We have been working with international legal frameworks for a long time”, explains Lima. Other cases they handle involve companies needing to protect specific software on which their businesses are built, as well as

fashion and design brands, such as a client in the natural stone sector who requires copyright protection for their artistic pieces. Their goal is to leverage their experience in patent litigation, intellectual property rights, trademarks, and copyrights across Europe. “We want to expand our transactional and strategic consulting services in IP, particularly before the Unified Patent Court”, says Santos.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY: A GROWING PRACTICE

NLP emerges at a particularly favourable moment for intellectual property as a legal practice, an area of increasing interest to businesses. With technology transfer at the heart of major transactions, patent portfolios are maturing. “Companies are becoming more aware of the importance of securing IP rights. It’s a factor that can determine the success or failure of a business”, notes Santos. Additionally, clients are already taking a proactive stance regarding the risks of infringing on third-party patents and the importance of acting preventively to protect their own rights, according to the partners. The very existence of the UPC—an international court established by EU member states to handle patent infringement and validity cases, which opened in June 2023—is a sign that the sector is only set to expand.

In Portugal, among legal advisors specializing in the field, the sector is currently dominated by IP departments within large law firms or small structures that do not focus exclusively on intellectual property. Within this landscape, NLP aims to set itself apart by offering specialized services with an international approach. “Although based in Lisbon, we operate in a European context and are prepared to work with lawyers from other jurisdictions”, says Lima.

From day one, the founding partners have been working on assembling a team capable of handling growing demand. Currently, six



«Ultimately, beyond studying and developing technical expertise, what truly matters is having a clear purpose»

Sara Nazaré

THE IMPORTANCE OF IP IN BUSINESS

- Companies with intellectual property rights (IPR) generate **23.8% to 41%** more revenue compared to those without them
- Approximately half of large companies hold IPRs
- Businesses that own IPRs pay wages that are **22%** higher
- **39.4%** of all employment in the EU (**81 million**) can be attributed to IPR-intensive industries
- **47%** of the total economic activity (GDP) in the EU is attributable to IPR-intensive industries

Source: "Intellectual property rights and firm performance in the European Union. Firm-level analysis report, January 2025", by European Union Intellectual Property Office

lawyers work at NLP, but the firm has plans to expand its team. Recruiting new talent—both junior and senior—is a key focus for 2025, and applications have already started coming in, many of them driven by NLP's strong connections with universities and research institutes. The ideal candidates are not only expected to have technical expertise but also a passion for innovation and technology, along with the ability to grow organically with the firm.

EYES ON THE FUTURE

On the technology front, NLP has been incorporating innovative solutions to improve the efficiency and quality of its services. "We are even planning to launch a project related to the use of artificial intelligence to promote IP knowledge", says Nazaré – although details of the initiative remain confidential for now.

In the medium and long term, NLP plans to continue its strategic growth, strengthening its patent litigation practice while expanding into consultancy and transactions. "I truly feel like we are already in 2026. Our best forecasts have already come true", Santos celebrates.

When asked what advice they would give to young lawyers, the partners emphasize that enthusiasm is the foundation of everything. "Many people approach us saying they see NLP as a source of inspiration. They think: 'If they made it, why can't I?' Ultimately, beyond studying and developing technical expertise, what truly matters is having a clear purpose", says Nazaré.

In a legal sector still largely dominated by men, big firms, and established names, fact is that the world is changing – and NLP is proof of that. "Perhaps we are a sign of a paradigm shift", says Lima. "If we can serve as a reference for younger generations and contribute to values like inclusion and diversity, that alone is something to be proud of".