

Int'l Young Lawyers Rep Sees The World As Her Network

By **Emma Cueto**

Law360 (September 23, 2022, 12:02 PM EDT) -- After being named as the representative from the United States to the International Association for Young Lawyers, Katja Garvey of Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP spoke with Law360 Pulse about how she first got involved with the organization, the benefits it provides to young attorneys, and her plans for the role.

Garvey, who is originally from Germany and attended law school there before moving to the U.S., is a partner and chair of Porter Wright's international business and trade practice group. She has been a member of the International Association for Young Lawyers, which uses the acronym AIJA from its French name, for eight years.

Founded in 1962, AIJA currently has as members 4,000 lawyers under age 45 from 90 countries, and hosts events around the world. As the new U.S. representative, Garvey will serve a three-year term, which she said she plans to make the most of.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

How did you first get involved with AIJA?

My first interaction with AIJA was actually through a German law firm that I was doing some work with. They brought it up as a potential interesting organization for me and my career. That was in 2013, so I had just gotten licensed about year before. That same year, I signed up and went to my first event in Prague, and I was immediately caught up in the AIJA spirit! I loved the networking opportunities and the content of the sessions. All of the attendees were so outgoing and friendly. I'm happy to have been a member ever since.

What are some things in the eight years you've been involved that stand out to you?

Obviously, the first thing is attending the conferences. I've had the chance to go to Prague; Rotterdam, [Netherlands]; Munich; New York; Rome; [and] Gothenburg, Sweden, through various conferences. The opportunity to meet other lawyers who are practicing in the international space has been invaluable for my career and for my international network that I utilize on a daily or at least weekly basis.



Katja Garvey

One of the events that definitely stands out to me is I attended the half-year conference in Gothenburg in May, and I was actually on the organizing committee, helping with the content in the privacy and intellectual property space. It was a very cool opportunity to be on the front end organizing things, meeting way more people than I usually would if I just attended as a participant and getting a sense of how to organize a conference and line up speakers. And I also moderated a session there. So I got to know various industry leaders in the privacy space in the autonomous vehicle area.

I also would like to mention the AIJA women's network. It was founded a couple years ago and focuses on the challenges in the legal profession for women. It focuses on topics like bias and how men can be allies — membership in the network is not exclusive to women. I think it's a fantastic initiative, and I actually moderated the first session in 2020.

What are some ways that your work with the organization connects with your practice and your role as chair of the international business and trade practice group at Porter Wright?

I would definitely say that the biggest part is the networking. That helps with inbound referrals, but also so that I can serve my U.S. clients if they have needs anywhere in the world — everything is just a WhatsApp message away. It's always rewarding to see those connections work both ways.

But also obviously, with the content, I pick ones that work with my practice area. One that stood out was a seminar in New York in 2018 about the General Data Protection Regulation. It's a law that transformed the privacy framework in Europe, but has huge impacts on companies in the U.S. and around the world, so it was very timely to have a two-day seminar on that and get together with other professionals around the world to share our expertise.

As you become U.S. representative to AIJA, what are your plans for the role? What are some things you'd like to do?

AIJA is traditionally and historically more of a European organization — most of the members are in Europe, and I would say a majority of the events are in Europe. So one of my challenges, but also opportunities, is to raise membership in the U.S., help bring more events to the United States, and help spread the AIJA spirit. Since we only have about 100 members here, it's also a great opportunity. Compared to some small European countries with more members, I think there's a huge potential for the U.S. to grow our members.

One issue we have in the U.S. is everything is so far apart. One of the tasks for the national representative is usually to organize local events — happy hours and things like that. But as of right now that's hard in the U.S. I think there's only two members in Ohio, for example. I think Miami is the largest group, probably, but overall our members are very spread out. So we're trying to create a U.S. community as well.

And as I said, also bring more conferences to the United States. We have one in 2023 in New York City that is mergers and acquisitions-focused, and we're planning other, smaller get-togethers around other international conferences, like an International Bar Association conference. Usually there is an AIJA event, a breakfast or a happy hour, that are tacked onto those conferences.

What is your pitch for young lawyers in the U.S.?

My pitch is that it's a huge opportunity to make valuable connections around the globe and help you

develop business in the United States. I think we're in a unique position in the United States because of the variation in state laws.

But then, it's also a huge opportunity to grow and learn from others. AIJA is for lawyers under 45 — you pretty much get kicked out at that age — so there's a lot of opportunity to take leadership roles at an early stage in your career. Just getting that experience of preparing for a conference or being part of an organizing committee, those opportunities are somewhat rare if you're an associate.

What are some events coming up that you're excited about?

So many! Each year, there's 20 or 25 in-person events all over the world. There's our first ever conference in Nairobi, [Kenya,] next year. The next half-year conference in the spring is in The Hague in the Netherlands, and then I'm most excited about the annual conference in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil.

As you can see, they're trying to spread it out across the globe, so people have opportunities no matter where they live. Our last annual conference was in Singapore, for example.

And obviously, there are tons of other events from Budapest in Hungary; Davos, Switzerland; Hamburg, Germany. And there are lots of online events as well.

--Editing by Alanna Weissman.