

# Dorda sets high bar for gender equality in the legal profession

By Noemi Distefano July 01 2025



Christoph Brogyányi (second left) and Francine Brogyányi (second right) at the Women in Business Law Awards EMEA 2025

**Managing partner Francine Brogyányi talks about how the Austrian firm's gender-focused initiatives have made it a place aspiring lawyers want to work for**

For the past decade, Vienna-headquartered law firm [Dorda](#) has been steadily transforming its workplace culture, placing gender equality, flexible working and long-term career support for women at the centre of its strategy.

The firm picked up three prizes at this year's [Women in Business Law EMEA Awards](#), hosted by the [Legal Benchmarking Group](#) in London on June 25.

Among those, the firm was awarded Law Firm of the Year for its work-life balance culture, and Jurisdiction Firm of the Year - Austria for its policies to support gender diversity at all levels of seniority.

Here, we speak with Francine Brogyányi, managing partner of the firm and partner in the health and life science practice group in Vienna, about the creation of the Women@Dorda initiative and other programmes that the firm has established to empower women in the legal profession.

As of June 2025, women represent more than 57% of the firm's total workforce. They also constitute 50% of Dorda's attorneys at law and nearly 60% of its associates. While progress continues at the senior level, 15% of those holding partnership positions are women.

## From stigma to strength

Brogyányi has been at the firm for nearly 25 years, and it was back in 2016 that she created Women@Dorda, an initiative she works on with her colleague and firm's partner Magdalena Nietzsche.

Brogyányi's own experience returning to work after maternity leave was one of the key inspirations behind Women@Dorda.

She tells IFLR that her personal experience was rather positive, having become partner between having her two children.

"With my first son, I stayed at home for a year; with my second, half a year. I came back part-time, and the firm was extremely flexible," she recalls.

But her positive story was not the norm for many women in law.

"I think I was the first woman to do that in a long time," she tells IFLR.

She notes that she had come across many women – not only at Dorda – who would choose to not pursue their careers in law, or to not become partners, because they couldn't imagine how they could have balanced it all.

Drawing from her own positive experience, she became convinced that what had worked so well for her could work just as well for other women.

"We heard this time and time again in exit interviews: *'I don't know if I'll have a family, but if I do, I can't see how I could stay in a big law firm,'*" she recalls.

Through its Women@Dorda initiative and other programmes, the firm established a suite of policies: and partners can now work part-time – minimum 50% – with no justification required. That

means working fewer hours to raise children is as valid as doing so to care for someone — or simply to hike or pursue music on Fridays, for instance.

What began as a gender-related issue has now evolved.

“From 2016 to today, more men than women work part-time,” explains Brogyányi. “That’s made it a non-issue. There’s no stigma anymore — and that helps everyone.”

So far, the results have been striking for the firm. When the initiative started, under 20% of the firm’s lawyers were women. Today, nearly six in 10 employees are women.

## A point of difference

These efforts not only change Dorda’s internal culture, but they’re also playing a role in attracting new talent.

“From a recruiting perspective, it makes a huge difference,” says Brogyányi.

Candidates frequently mention the Women@Dorda initiative in interviews, often citing it as a reason for applying.

“It’s not just women – young men also say it’s the kind of employer they want to work for,” she adds.

And even in client engagement, especially female ones, the women-focused initiatives have had a positive impact.

Alongside Women@Dorda, the firm runs targeted mentorship schemes for female associates and lawyers. These were originally women-only but given their success, two years ago, the firm opened them up to male colleagues as well.

One of the most significant programmes is the Leadership Academy, created exclusively for female lawyers to equip them with the business and leadership skills necessary for partnership.

“It’s rhetorical training, sales training, leadership development — everything they need to take the next step, whether it’s at Dorda or somewhere else,” says Brogyányi.

## Peer confidence

Central to the Leadership Academy is the concept of personal branding.

“We ask: *who do you want to be? Who do you want to represent?*” Brogyányi explains.

In a saturated market, women often find it more difficult to position themselves confidently.

“Men tend to say, *‘I’m the best — hire me.’* For many women, that’s harder, it’s linked to their upbringing,” she continues. “This training helps them develop that confidence to put themselves front and centre.”

The firm also organises tailored sessions with women at C-suite level, where associates and lawyers can hear real, unscripted career journeys, the struggles, the detours and the lessons.

“It’s important for younger women to see that there are different ways of making it to the top,” says Brogyányi.

While Women@Dorda can be defined as the flagship initiative, the firm takes a broader view on inclusion.

“We’re open to everything and diversity is part of our DNA,” she concludes. “People here are free to be who they are – and that’s something we’re deeply proud of.”

#### Topics

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Noemi joined the IFLR team in 2024. An award-winning journalist, she previously worked as a reporter and podcast host at IR Magazine. Her earlier roles include reporting for Newtrade Media and Shephard Media. Noemi holds a Master’s degree in journalism from Edinburgh Napier University.