

SALARY GUIDE | LEGAL

Belgium & Luxembourg
2023 edition

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Editorial

by Malik Gourara, founder

2022 was a year of adaptation and recovery, during which we reconnected with each other both personally and professionally. It was an opportunity to reinvent the ways we work together, with more resilience, blending face-to-face and remote work. However, the year was also marked by economic challenges, which brought about new opportunities and hurdles.

The rise of digitalization has brought new ways of working to many sectors, including the legal industry. Virtual meetings and online court hearings have become commonplace, and remote work has increased flexibility and productivity. Additionally, clients' growing concern for sustainability has prompted law firms to incorporate more eco-friendly practices into their operations.

Despite the economic challenges, the legal industry has remained resilient. Many law firms have adapted their strategies to meet the evolving needs of clients, particularly in areas such as data protection, cybersecurity, and employment law, which have seen a rise in demand. The continued growth of these areas suggests a bright future for the sector as firms expand their services and adapt to changing customer needs.

As we look to the future, there is reason to be optimistic. The legal profession has demonstrated its capacity to adapt to new challenges, and we can be confident in our ability to navigate the uncertainties that lie ahead. As we enter 2023, we should continue to embrace new ways of collaborating and seek out opportunities to grow and evolve. For instance, firms can explore the potential of emerging technologies or invest in employee training and development programs. By doing so, we can build a stronger and more resilient workforce that will thrive for years to come.

With this Salary Guide, we provide valuable insights into the current state of the legal industry for lawyers and law firms based in Belgium and Luxembourg. We hope it will serve as a useful resource to help position your current remuneration and make informed decisions.

**Let's look forward to the future
with hope and optimism,
knowing that we have the skills
and expertise necessary to meet
whatever challenges lie ahead!**



Hot topic: the impact of digitalization on the legal profession (with Bird & Bird Law)

The legal industry has been impacted and slowly transformed over the past decade with the rise of digitalization, particularly in areas such as M&A. In 2023, the digitalization of law professions will reach new heights. For this year's salary guide, we had the opportunity to exchange with [Benoit Van Asbroeck](#), Partner in Brussels in IP/IT, and [Karen Jacks](#), CTO from [Bird & Bird](#).

The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digitalization across various industries, as companies were forced to adapt to remote work and online services. This shift has not only improved efficiency, but it has also provided new opportunities for businesses to reach customers and expand their operations. As Benoît explained, the use of new digital tools and automation has made tasks easier and more streamlined, making it an essential part of modern law firms.

About Law Digitalization

First things first, how should we define digitalization? "It is mainly moving from paper to paperless activities as we are working with new tools. It is facilitating several parts of the job by automatization", explains Benoît.

Indeed, the use of advanced technology and artificial intelligence tools allows lawyers to work faster and more accurately when it comes to commodity work. It facilitates the complete access to digits, simplifies the decision process and meeting with clients.

Benoit goes further: "For some files, I'm working with associates in Poland, Germany and England at the same time

Thanks to digitalization, sharing documents has become much easier, which significantly improves the quality of our work. We can now deliver better advice to the client more quickly. Enlarging our team with IT tools makes us more competitive."

In addition, digitalization has enabled lawyers to manage complex cases with ease, resulting in better outcomes for the clients. The primary goal of this transformation is to increase efficiency, allowing lawyers to focus on more sophisticated work while supervising the more routine tasks done by automation.

We can think of lawyers 2.0 as being enhanced by technology rather than replaced by it. With new tools and attitudes, legal professionals can become:

- Facilitators who help resolve conflicts in an amicable way;
- Innovators who encourage clients to view their problems from a fresh perspective;
- Advocates for ethical rights who remind people of the fundamental meaning and importance of basic needs;
- Architects of solutions who bring together experts from diverse backgrounds to tackle complex challenges;
- Legal teachers who translate complex legal concepts into clear and personalized solutions.

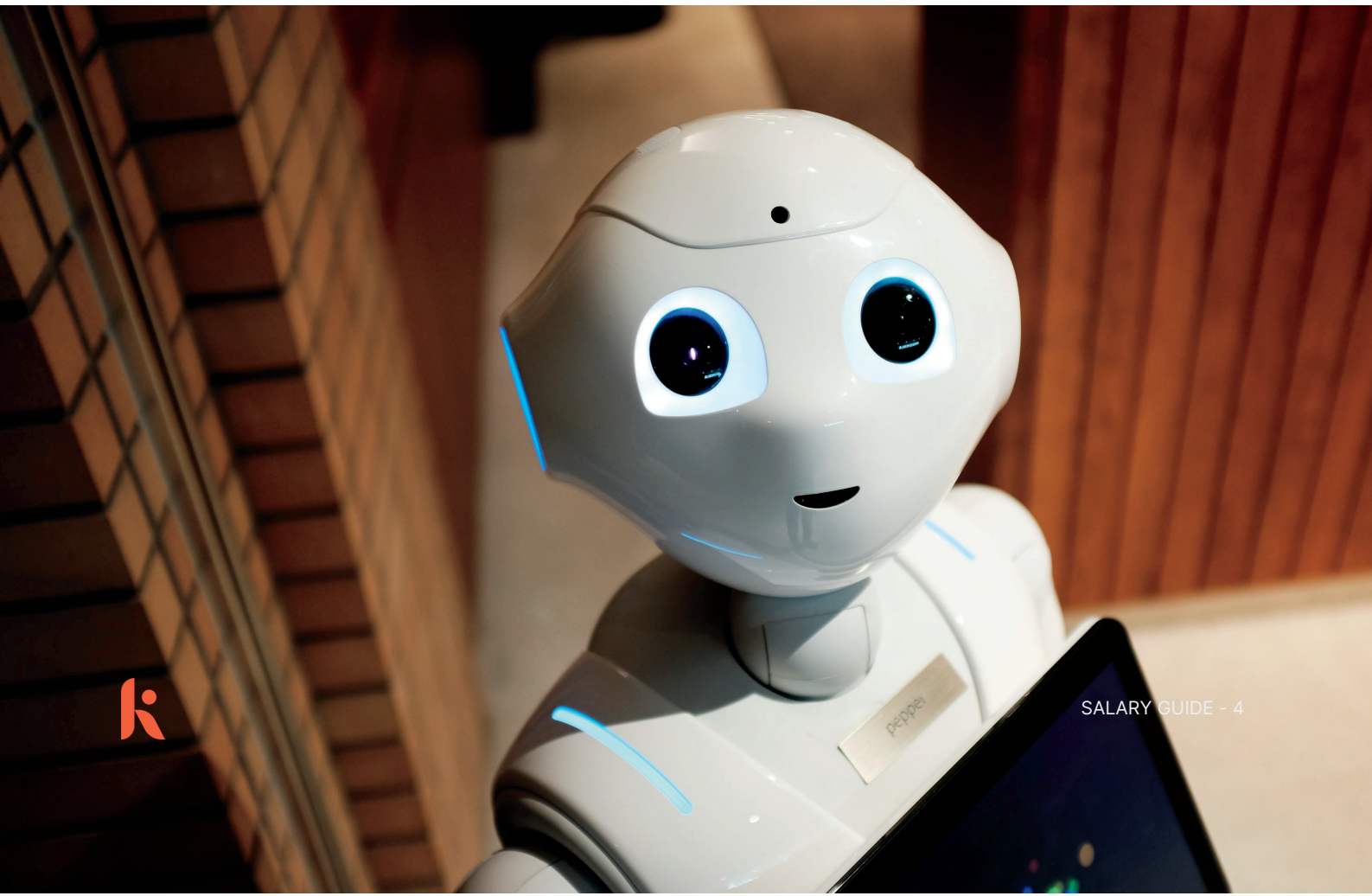


Education & split between law firms

Digitalization is not easily taught in Universities, as it requires expensive technologies and specialized knowledges. Therefore, much of the knowledge of IT tools is learned once you join a law firm. At this level, we recommend that firms invest in digitalization to remain competitive and avoid losing market share.

"Until recently, there were two categories: large law firms and traditional law firms. However, in the future, I think we will have digitalized firms and non-digitalized firms. The non-digitalized firms will remain in areas that involve human and proximity law, such as criminal law. This sector is all about social contact, so technology is less needed, although artificial intelligence could work well", highlights Benoit.

Furthermore, digitalization in the legal industry opens up new possibilities and creates job opportunities. As Karen mentions, "the legal tech engineer or legal technologist is a professional who combines legal expertise with technical skills to drive digital change. This hybrid role benefits from the knowledge of both worlds, as the lawyer understands what needs to be done and how to work, while the technical expert possesses the capability and knowledge to integrate technology into the legal field. In short, the legal tech engineer is a key figure in advancing the digital transformation of the legal profession".



“ *A robot will never replace a lawyer. However, it can help him/her to improve his/her performance and save time.* ”

Concerns

Concerns about the digitalization of law have also emerged. One such concern relates to storage and energy consumption, as law firms increasingly rely on data centers to store and manage their data. Bird & Bird, for example, is addressing this issue by engaging with their data center providers to ensure they are energy-efficient and are offsetting their carbon footprint. As responsible companies, law firms must be aware of their environmental impact and take steps to mitigate it.

Another consequence of digitalization is the rise of alternative legal services providers, which can be seen as new competitors to traditional law firms. This trend is expected to impact law firms' market share. As Benoit noted, law firms must position themselves strategically by combining artificial intelligence with human expertise. AI can facilitate work within law firms, allowing for online portals and chatbots that provide legal advice and consultations. This makes legal services more accessible to people worldwide.

However, there will come a point where lawyers must position themselves as legal teachers and architects of solutions, rather than mere providers of legal advice. As AI takes over routine tasks, lawyers must focus on adding value through strategic insights, creative problem-solving, and ethical guidance. In this way, digitalization can be seen as an opportunity for them to enhance their roles and make a greater impact on society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the digitalization of law professions is bringing about significant benefits for the industry, making legal services more efficient. And we are only at the beginning of it!

Lawyers need not fear new technological tools. Instead, they should embrace them as enhancers of skills and efficiency. These new technologies are designed to optimize the performance of legal professionals, not to replace them. Lawyers will continue to play a crucial role, but will also have more time for certain tasks thanks to automation of tedious and time-consuming work.

In addition, online organizational and communication tools facilitate collaboration among colleagues, internationally, and even between law firms. Digital technology is unparalleled in its ability to manage agendas, assist with writing, and aid research.



Why a salary guide?

You are about to discover our Salary Guide, a tool that we hope will help you position your current remuneration through the prism of your experience. The data presented in this document has been gathered by us based on hundreds of phone and in-person interviews with our candidates and clients over the past year.

However, it is important to consider several factors before concluding that your salary does or does not reflect the realities of the market in which your work.

ABOUT THE BELGIUM MARKET:

- All lawyers active in law firms and subscribed to the Bar work as independents, and the VAT is not included in this guide.

ABOUT THE LUXEMBOURG MARKET:

- More and more law firms are offering employee status to lawyers. What was once the exception is now becoming the norm. Therefore, we have decided to base the salary information on employee status.
- Although many law firms offer additional benefits, such as car allowance, meal vouchers, parking spots, bonuses, and more, we have decided not to include them in the employee packages for the sake of consistency.
- For the independent status, we have converted their package into an employee package, which is generally defined as a reduction of 12.5% (up to 15%), corresponding to social security contributions.



Reasons salaries fluctuate

THE ROLES WE COVER

This document focuses on providing data on the remuneration of lawyers working in law firms, as we have found it to be the sector and profession with the least relevant information on the topic. Therefore, we have excluded salary information related to other roles we cover in our legal department, such as in-house lawyers, compliance officers, and other legal staff members.

Visualization roles

To give a clear overview of the data, we have grouped lawyers based on two axes: seniority and expertise. Regarding seniority, we have used the titles commonly used in law firms, namely:

- Junior level (from 0 to 3 years)
- Mid-level (from 3 to 6 years)
- Senior level (from 6 to 10 years)
- Counsel* level (as from 10 years)
- Partner* level (as from 12 years)

*It's important to note that the criteria to become Counsel or Partner differ slightly from the usual seniority in terms of years of experience. Law firms usually consider other elements, such as capacity for business development, bringing own clients to the firm, managing a team, and others.

TYPES OF STRUCTURE

Different types of law firms can be identified in Belgium and Luxembourg. In terms of remuneration, there are not many distinctions to be made, except for the trend observed in elite firms where salaries tend to be significantly higher. The main categories are:

- Local law firms
- Specialized boutique law firms
- Benelux law firms
- Big four firms
- Network firms
- Elite firms: Silver circle & Magic circle

Peaks and troughs

In any sector, there will always be professionals whose salaries deviate more than normal from the mean. Unfortunately, candidates often use these salaries as examples when negotiating their own packages while changing jobs. It is important to note that these peaks and troughs are often linked to one of three factors:

- High salaries based on the amount of work (billable and non-billable hours);
- High salaries due to frequent job changes (negotiating a new contract often means a salary increase);
- Law firms offering above-average salaries to attract top talent and stand out in the market

Our general advice to candidates is not to base their motivations on these peaks and troughs, but on their professional goals and work environment.



Salaries in Belgium

These salary ranges are based on a large panel of lawyers working in Belgium and mainly in Brussels. These figures reflect the salaries in mid-sized and large law firms. There are numerous factors that may explain the possible variations in the market.

	junior	mid	senior	counsel	partner
corporate	50 - 72k	72 - 92k	92 - 116k	116 - 142k	> 142k
IP/IT	39 - 66k	66 - 79k	79 - 102k	102 - 130k	> 130k
tax	43 - 54k	54 - 76k	76 - 96k	96 - 133k	> 133k
public	44 - 66k	66 - 87k	87 - 105k	105 - 131k	> 131k
banking	49 - 67k	67 - 88k	88 - 117k	117 - 137k	> 137k
labour	35 - 64k	64 - 79k	79 - 110k	110 - 126k	> 126k



Salaries in Luxembourg

These salary ranges are based on a large panel of lawyers working in Luxembourg. These figures reflect the salaries in mid-sized and large law firms. There are numerous factors that may explain the possible variations in the market.

	junior	mid	senior	counsel	partner
corporate	60 - 79k	79 - 99k	99 - 139k	139 - 175k	> 175k
funds	68 - 88k	88 - 115k	115 - 152k	152 - 186k	> 186k
litigation	59 - 74k	74 - 95k	95 - 110k	110 - 149k	> 149k
banking	66 - 83k	83 - 98k	98 - 122k	122 - 180k	> 180k
tax	63 - 81k	81 - 101k	101 - 131k	131 - 170k	> 170k

Career progression path

Lawyers in Luxembourg progress through a hierarchy of titles based on their level of experience and responsibility. After completing their traineeship, they typically begin as junior associates and can advance to mid-level and senior-level positions. They usually become a Senior after five years of practice, although this may vary by firm and practice area.

In order not to give lawyers the feeling of "stagnating" between their mid-level and senior status, several firms have introduced an intermediate position: "Managing/Supervising Associate", which includes managerial responsibilities, team supervision, clients management and business development. The goal is to make lawyers feel valued and to help them see their career progressing.



Conclusions

As recruiters and career advisors on behalf of lawyers based in Belgium and Luxembourg, we are in constant contact with professionals at various stages of their careers. Many of them, whether just starting out or with several years of experience, are now prioritizing work-life balance. Little by little, salary is becoming less of a priority for lawyers, who are looking to feel happy in their personal lives while still fulfilling their professional goals. Being able to leave the office to pick up their children from school, go to the gym, pursue their hobbies, and more doesn't truly have a price.

However, the reality of the legal profession is characterized by a heavy workload and long working hours. To attract and retain top talent, law firms adopt various strategies. For example, international and Tier-One-rated firms tend to offer an "all-inclusive" work experience, like a 5-star hotel, which includes services such as nap rooms, therapists, and a private chef. This is their way of differentiating themselves from competitors by offering luxury options to their collaborators. However, if this formula tends to attract some talents, not all of them has the same vision of work.

Today's young professionals (Gen Z) tend to seek a first experience in a prestigious law firm with a good reputation to add to their CV. However, they may not stay long if they don't find meaning and relatable values in their work.

In terms of salary, we have observed an overall increase in wages, commonly between 5 and 10%. This is comparable to the indexation of employees.

We would like to draw lawyers' attention to the fact that salaries are difficult to compare, particularly because of billable hours. Calculating a billable hours ratio is necessary to position yourself correctly on the market.

Last but not least, it's important to bear in mind that the consequences of the crisis are yet to be fully reflected in the realm of wages. Our figures are based on observations from the year 2022 and therefore do not account for the salary indexation that took place in January 2023. It is worth noting that in Luxembourg, two more indexations of 2.5% each have been planned in the coming months (March and July).



Our team and services

10 years of expertise

Kingsley is a recruitment and career management agency with offices in Belgium and Luxembourg. Our passionate team provides customized support in five niche areas: bank & insurance, finance, legal, real estate, and IT.

Whether you're seeking to recruit top talent or develop your own career, we're committed to delivering expertise, benevolence, and boldness in all our services.

This year, we're celebrating a decade of providing exceptional career consulting services. Over the past 10 years, we've grown to a team of more than 20 employees, expanded our reach across five different markets in two countries, and have had the pleasure of working with a multitude of talented and inspiring candidates, clients, and partners. We've taken on many mandates and challenges, and have countless success stories to share.

Teamwork makes the dream work

At Kingsley, we believe in the power of teamwork to make dreams a reality. We're an innovative and benevolent company that prioritizes participative management and flexible work methods. We also place a particular emphasis on fostering a strong team spirit among our employees.



The Legal Team



Malik Gourara
team leader
Belgium & Luxembourg
mg@yourkingsley.com



Nawal Boukhari
senior career advisor
Belgium
nb@yourkingsley.com



Fiona Mantaza
career advisor
Luxembourg
fm@yourkingsley.com



Alban Abedinaj
career advisor
Belgium
aa@yourkingsley.com

Feel free to get in touch with our team!





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Companion**