

Social Responsibility and Social Innovation – Contributions from a Portuguese Law Firm –

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Abstract

The present study aims to analyze how a big law firm – in this case, Vieira de Almeida Law Firm (based in Portugal) – can adjust and accommodate general framework regarding social responsibility and social innovation to meet specific responsibilities (and needs) of lawyers.

It will be highlighted how this law firm has developed, especially in the last two decades, a solid program of social responsibility – with special focus on *pro bono* legal assistance, citizenship education, third sector capacity building, corporate volunteering, internal campaigns and environmental sustainability – and how it encouraged the promotion of social innovation actions, aligning different interests and agents and contributing for the development and dissemination of this area (for example, through the support of nonprofit civil society organizations).

Vieira de Almeida Law Firm (VdA) was chosen as a leading example in the Portuguese market of big law firms, since it supports a different approach on how lawyers can (and should) act when practicing law; appealing for a practice with purpose, in line with the values that are recognized by this law firm to be at the core of Justice.

Through the present study, we expect to enrich research on corporate social responsibility and social innovation regarding specifically law firms and contribute for the future development of studies in this area by the International Journal of Business Research and Management, promoting investigation that has not been particularly explored previously.

The Special Issue in which the present study is published – dedicated to “Social Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Finance: Theory and Practice in Challenging Times” – constitutes an opportunity to reveal how social responsibility and social innovation can be an important contribution to face new challenges, caused, for example, by pandemic times.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Law Firm, Social Innovation, Vieira de Almeida Law Firm, Social Demands.

1. INTRODUCTION

The main goal of the present research is to understand how a big law firm – like Vieira de Almeida Law Firm – can adjust and accommodate general framework regarding social responsibility and social innovation to meet specific responsibilities (and needs) of lawyers.

Supported by the case study of Vieira de Almeida Law Firm, some of the questions that led this research were: Can a law firm engage in social responsibility programs and social innovation like a common private company? If not, what are the responsibilities and needs of lawyers that require attention? Should law firms be strategic in the choice of initiatives to be integrated in social responsibility programs or should they indiscriminately choose causes to support?

Considering the purposes of the present manuscript (and after *Introduction*), the present research has been structured according to the following sequence: **Part 2** begins with a theoretical framework regarding Corporate Social Responsibility (**2.1.1** Concept, **2.1.2** Normative Recognition and Institutionalization of Corporate Social Responsibility in the Beginning of the 21st Century and **2.1.3** Social Responsibility in the Sector of Law Firms) and Social Innovation (**2.2.1** Literature Review, **2.2.2** Social Innovation in the Sector of Law firms); **Part 3** refers to the methodology used for research; **Part 4** focus on the Case Study (covering the external and internal dimension of social responsibility at Vieira de Almeida Law Firm); in **Part 5** we discuss and interpret the results of our findings, exploring how Vieira de Almeida Law Firm has accommodated general framework regarding social responsibility and social innovation to meet specific responsibilities and needs of lawyers; and, in **Part 6**, we present our conclusions, give notice of the limitations and implications of our work and offer some directions for future studies to be carried out for a better understanding of social responsibility and social innovation of law firms.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Corporate Social Responsibility

2.1.1 Concept

The concept of corporate social responsibility is not unanimous and each author describes social responsibility according not only to their own perspective and experience, but also inspired by external circumstances, like the social expectations of corporate behaviour.

Numerous authors have already focused on the concept of corporate social responsibility, describing how it was born and how it has developed through times.

Very recently, Carroll (2021) analysed the concept of corporate social responsibility since 1950 until present time and presented some important observations for the future.

Also, in the perspective of a literature review, Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir, and Davídsdóttir (2019) offer a good outlook of the concept of corporate social responsibility.

According to Carroll, it is possible to say that the modern age of corporate social responsibility began in 1953, with the release of the book *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman*, of Howard Bowen (an American economist), who analysed which responsibilities should be expected to be assumed by businessman towards society.

In his book, Bowen defined corporate social responsibility as the group of obligations of employers related to the adoption of policies and the development of lines of action that are able to respond to the values and desires of society.

In the 60th, several social movements (like the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the consumer movement or the environmental movement) started changing the relation between Society and Business.

Literature on corporate social responsibility increased meaningfully during this decade and different researchers started expressing different views in what concerns this concept (Xuan and Teal, 2011).

For example, McGuire (1963) supported the idea that companies do not have only legal and economic obligations, but also duties towards society. For this reason, companies should be interested in politics, as well as in social welfare, education and the well-being of the employees (Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir and Davídsdóttir, 2019).

Likewise, Walton, in 1967, sustained that the concept of corporate social responsibility implied the recognition of a relation between companies and society and companies should play a role in what concerns the improvement of the social and economic conditions of the time (Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir and Davídsdóttir, 2019).

In this decade, however, the concept of corporate social responsibility was still contested by some authors, like Milton Friedman, who, in 1962, considered that, in a free capitalist system, firms should limit themselves to the pursuit of economic benefits (Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir and Davídsdóttir, 2019).

During this decade, the implementation of corporate social responsibility had (mostly) a philanthropic character.

It was, however, only in the 70th that corporate social responsibility discussions truly began, definitions started to proliferate between academics and researchers and the expression gained notoriety.

Davis, in 1973, considered that corporate social responsibility should be considered as an answer from companies to questions that overcome economic, technical and legal aspects. For this author, firms should evaluate, in its decision-making process, the effects of its decisions on the external social system in a manner that should accomplish social benefits along with the traditional economic gains which the firm seeks (Xuan and Teal, 2011).

For Davis, social responsibility should begin where the law ends.

In 1979, Carroll considered that social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time.

Regardless of these developments, in the 70th, some authors, like Milton Friedman, still continued to express their opposition to the concept of corporate social responsibility.

To Friedman, the only obligation of managers was to maximize profits of the companies, in the limits accepted by society in what concerns law and moral. Social performance would be exclusive to managers acting not as businessmen but as human beings (Carroll, 2021).

In the 80th, numerous concerns aroused from society – like environmental pollution, employment discrimination, employee health and safety, quality of work life –, which allowed new concepts to be developed, like “business ethics” and “stakeholder management”.

Nevertheless, in this decade, Freeman gave a huge contribution for the development of corporate social responsibility, with his Stakeholder Theory (1984).

According to this theory, corporate social responsibility should go beyond what business has to satisfy to its shareholders to different social groups called stakeholders.

In the 90th, there was a growing interest in corporate social responsibility and it was a decade of institutionalization (for example, in 1992, the Association Business for Social Responsibility was created and, in 1995, the European Business Network of Social Cohesion – later renamed CSR Europe – was launched) and several companies began to publicize periodically annual social reports (describing actions in relation to community, workers and other stakeholders and towards the environment).

Despite this institutionalization, there were, however, no major developments in what concerns the definition of corporate social responsibility.

Nonetheless, in 1991, Carroll published his article *The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility*, expanding on areas that this author believed were crucial when implementing corporate social responsibility in an organization.

According to this author (2021), companies had four main responsibilities: i) economic responsibilities which can be considered at the foundation for the other levels of the pyramid; ii) legal responsibilities of the firm; iii) ethical responsibilities that shape the company's behaviour beyond the law-abiding duties; and iv) philanthropic responsibilities of the corporation with regards to its contribution to improve the quality of life of society.

During this decade, there was also an important contribution to the development of the relation between Business and Society with the concept of "The Triple Bottom Line", conceived by Elkington, in 1994, according to which corporations need to have socially and environmental responsible behaviour that should be positively balanced with its economic goals (Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir and Davídsdóttir, 2019).

After 2000, several new definitions were proposed by researchers, with an emerging concern on environment and on the relation between corporate social and financial performance across industries.

Craig Smith, in 2001, explained that the scope of social responsibility (from a business perspective) should include a broader set of stakeholders (people affected by corporate policies and practices) and that the fulfilment of the firms' obligations towards these stakeholders should minimize any harm and maximize the long-run beneficial impact of the firm on society (Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir and Davídsdóttir, 2019).

In the same year, Lantos, included strategic considerations to the definition of corporate social responsibility, considering that it can become strategic when it is part of the company's management plans for generating profits. For this author, companies should take part in activities that can be understood as socially responsible only if they result in financial returns for the firm (Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir and Davídsdóttir, 2019).

Since Lantos, other authors started using the term "strategic corporate social responsibility" (Porter and Kramer, 2006).

In the first decade of the 21st century, companies became more aware of the importance of dealing with global issues, like poor labour practices, human rights violations, anti-corruption policies and sustainable development.

In a context of globalisation, decisions regarding corporate social responsibility became more relevant affecting both sustainability and stakeholders.

The definitions of corporate social responsibility began, as a consequence, to reflect the belief that corporations have a new role in society in which they need to be responsive to social expectations and should be motivated by the search for sustainability, which means they need to make strategic decisions.

Still, in the early 2000's, Freeman and Mcvea also provided a new perspective to stakeholder theory; which reinforced the belief that corporations should be managed in the benefit of a broader set of stakeholders (Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir and Davídsdóttir, 2019).

On the other hand, Friedman and Miles (2002) highlighted that the relation between corporations and their stakeholders is dynamic and has different levels of influence on the firm (Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir and Davídsdóttir, 2019).

In the beginning of the century, there were also some important institutional contributions for the definition of corporate social responsibility, like the one developed by the *World Business Council for Sustainable Development*, according to which corporate social responsibility involves a business commitment to contribute to sustainable economic development working with employees, their families, the local community, and society at large to improve their quality of life.

Also, in 2003, *Corporate Social Responsibility Europe* (CSR Europe) considered that corporate social responsibility allows companies to manage and improve its social and environmental impact to generate value for both its shareholders and its stakeholders, by innovating its strategy, organization and operations.

In 2006, Porter and Kramer emphasised that companies can achieve a competitive advantage through corporate social responsibility (Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir and Davídsdóttir, 2019).

From the point of view of these authors, a strategic approach to corporate social responsibility can result in the creation of shared value in terms of benefits for society while improving the firm's competitiveness.

For that reason, Porter and Kramer consider that companies should, first, look inside to map the social impact of its value chain and, consequently, identify the positive and negative effect of its activities on society; focusing on the ones with the greatest strategic value. Then, companies should look outside to understand the influence of their social context on their productivity and on the execution of their business strategy.

Porter and Kramer developed the idea that companies should look at corporate social responsibility from an holistic point of view (instead of using it as a tool for achieving a social license to operate, achieving and maintaining a reputational status or addressing stakeholder satisfaction), maximizing the interdependence between business and society and increasing the company's potential to create social benefits while supporting their business goals.

The notion of creating value through corporate social responsibility was further developed by these authors, in 2011, considering it as a necessary step in the evolution of business and defining it as: "*policies and operating practices that enhance the competitiveness of a company while simultaneously advancing the economic and social conditions in the communities in which it operates*" (Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir and Davídsdóttir, 2019).

In 2015, Carroll underlined that corporate social responsibility has been accepted in the business community as part of the social contract between business and society and should be considered as "*the benchmark and centerpiece of the socially conscious business movement*" (Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir and Davídsdóttir, 2019).

Very recently (and as mentioned before), Carroll (2021) reflected on the period 2000-2020 and presented several observations about the future of corporate social responsibility and the new normal after pandemic time.

According to this author, the pandemic's effects have been deep and wide and business will have an enormous rebuilding mission when all it is over.

To Carroll, the pandemic times reminded companies of the critical role that business can play in what concerns social responsibilities in the world, especially when societies are confronted with major problems like unemployment or human rights violations.

Companies will, therefore, have to ensure that their two primary stakeholder groups – employees and consumers – are attended to in a sustainable manner. On the other hand, with the huge development of the digital age, urgent concerns with cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and governance must be attended.

In what concerns corporate social responsibility, this author considers that certain areas like the health industry or the educational system will have to adapt to the changing expectations of the public.

Companies' commitment to corporate social responsibility must become more strategic and more cohesive in the future, prioritizing people, making digitalization, health and wellness matter, building resilience to accelerated change and championing stakeholder capitalism.

It is expected, however, that, in the next years, alternative concepts will continue to develop – like corporate citizenship, stakeholder management, sustainability, creating shared value, conscious capitalism, responsible management and purpose-driven business – and sustainability will remain at the center stage.

In this sense, business frameworks will have to adapt through a holistic framework that is based on the principles of social responsibility, in a way that it combines the notions of sustainability, the generation of shared value, and the belief that companies can redefine their purpose to do what is best for the world.

To summarize our research on the concept of corporate social responsibility, we can say that it can be considered as an “umbrella concept”, covering several understandings on the relation between Business and Society.

The vision of management according to which companies exist to give profit and contribute to social purposes by the payment of taxes and by creating jobs – allowing that richness can overturn to society – has been replaced by the idea that corporate social responsibility should go beyond profit and the respect for law.

In this context, companies should contribute actively to social development, not only through profit, but being active in the resolution of social problems, minimizing eventual prejudicial damages that may result from their activity and contributing to meet the demands and requirements of stakeholders and the goal of sustainability.

For those purposes, two main dimensions must be considered by companies: the internal dimension and the external dimension.

The internal dimension is centered on the corporation itself, concerning especially employees (in relation to working conditions, wages, administrations of benefits, health and safety, work life balance, mental health, adaptations to change, management of environmental impact, diversity and inclusion, among others) and shareholders (companies are expected to promote an honourable code of conduct amongst its business partners, for example).

The external dimension integrates the relation between the company and external actors, (stimulating ethics in business and demanding a responsible behaviour in relation, for example, to human rights), like clients (including the prevention of conflict of interest, resolution mechanisms, confidentiality issues, firm policies against bribery and money laundering), supply chain

management, competitors (preventing or minimizing practices that can cause real damages to the competitors and supporting the principle of free competition), public entities, regulators and local communities (companies are expected to be part of the local economy by providing jobs, consuming local products and services, charity and contributing to local taxes, among others).

2.1.2 Normative Recognition and Institutionalization of Corporate Social Responsibility in the Beginning of the 21st Century

As will be described further below, according to VdA's Corporate Social Responsibility Report of 2018, this law firm institutionalized its *Pro Bono and Corporate Social Responsibility Programme* in 2008.

This event occurred on a decade of vigorous normative recognition and institutionalization in what concerns corporate social responsibility (Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir and Davídsdóttir, 2019).

In fact, in the year 2000, the *United Nations Global Compact* was launched, with the purpose of encouraging businesses and firms worldwide to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies (and to report on their implementation), stating ten principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption.

Also in the year 2000, the United Nations adopted the *Millennium Declaration*, with its eight *Millennium Development Goals* and set an international agenda for the following fifteen years.

The promotion of corporate social responsibility, as a European strategy, began one year after with the adoption of the *Millennium Development Goals*, when the European Commission presented, at 2001, a *Green Paper* called *Promoting a European framework for Corporate Social Responsibility*.

Since then, the European Commission has led a series of campaigns for promoting the European approach to corporate social responsibility.

In 2005, the European Commission launched the *European Roadmap for Businesses – Towards a Competitive and Sustainable Enterprise*, which outlined the European objectives with regards to corporate social responsibility for the following years.

In 2011, the European Commission published the renewed *European Union strategy for Corporate Social Responsibility for the years 2011–2014*.

Already in 2015, CSR Europe launched the *Enterprise 2020 Manifesto*, which aimed to set the direction of businesses in Europe and play a leading role in developing an inclusive sustainable economy (CSR Europe 2016).

The global recognition of corporate social responsibility has also been influenced by international certifications designed to address social responsibility; such as the ISO 26000, approved in September of 2010.

ISO 26000 summarizes the principles and themes that social responsibility embraces, in line with international treaties like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Labour Organization's fundamental conventions.

According to ISO 26000, social responsibility should be defined as "*the responsibility of an organisation for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment, through transparent and ethical behaviour*".

In article 6, ISO 26000 invites organisations to structure their approach around different areas of action: 1. Organisational governance; 2. Human rights (due diligence, avoidance of complicity, discrimination, civil rights etc.); 3. Labour practices (social protection, social dialogue, health and safety at work etc.); 4. Environment (prevention of pollution, sustainable resource use, protection of the environment and biodiversity etc.); 5. Fair operating practices (anti-corruption, fair competition, respect for property rights etc.); 6. Consumer issues (protecting consumers' health and safety, data protection and privacy, education and awareness etc.); and 7. Community involvement and development (community involvement, employment creation and skills development, social investment etc.).

In 2015, it was the launch of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, and the adoption of seventeen *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs).

The United Nations Sustainability Development Goals provided organizations with a standard framework they can adopt to build corporate social responsibility programs around.

Even if the SDGs do not represent any commitments for the private sector, countries that adopted them have been creating specific policies and regulations that will translate into pressure for firms to implement new business practices or to improve their current ones.

This is particularly important considering that SDGs cover a wide range of areas, from climate change to the eradication of poverty and hunger, as well as the fostering of innovation and sustainable consumption.

In the European Union, Directive 2014/95/EU requires large companies of public interest (listed companies, banks, insurance companies and other companies designated by national authorities as public-interest entities) to disclose non-financial and diversity information beginning on their 2018 reports and onwards.

In 2015, the *Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals* reflected a new social contract in which corporations are expected to play a relevant role in the global efforts to achieve SDGs.

Already, in 2021, the *COP26 United Nations Climate Conference* completed the technical negotiations on the Paris Agreement Rulebook, which fixes the transparency and reporting requirements for all parties to track progress against their emission reduction targets. The Rulebook also includes the article 6 mechanisms, which set out the functioning of international carbon markets to support further global cooperation on emission reductions.

At COP26, all parties agreed, for the first, time to accelerate efforts towards the phase-down of unabated coal power and inefficient fossil fuel subsidies and recognised the need for support towards a just transition.

2.1.3 Social Responsibility in the Sector of Law Firms

As access to law is considered a fundamental value for justice, citizenship and social cohesion, lawyers have always been associated to social responsibilities towards the society, mainly through *pro bono* legal services – which consist, primarily, in free legal services for those who need and cannot afford its payment – and charity.

However, in the last decades, practice of law has changed significantly and lawyers are now being asked to answer to different challenges that came from clients (specially, large enterprises that have been incorporating, at their management, strong programs of corporate social

responsibility) and from organizations of the social economy (whether by assisting the capacity building of social organizations or providing *pro bono* legal support).

In fact, as many (or most) of the law firm clients started being involved in corporate social responsibility programs and law firms are also considered as suppliers of services, it has been realized, by many law firms, that there should be an alignment with their clients in what concerns corporate social responsibility policies.

Law firms started being requested to meet a certain standard of behavior regarding social corporate responsibility and, as a consequence, began developing their own programs of social responsibility and publishing, in a regular basis, information about it (Branco and Rodrigues, 2008).

Simultaneously, several representative organisations of the legal sector realized the importance of the theme and started publishing some guidance on corporate social responsibility and the role of the legal profession.

For example, the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) and the International Bar Association have developed some guidance on corporate social responsibility and the role of the legal profession, highlighting that lawyers will increasingly be called to advise their clients on social responsibility matters and, simultaneously, will be subject to social corporate responsibilities as “enterprises” and as suppliers of services in their client’s supply chain.

To CCBE, the essential elements of Corporate Responsibility of the Legal Profession are:

- i) National laws and Bar Rules regulating attorneys’ responsibilities and ethical standards;
- ii) CCBE Charter of Core Principles of the European Legal Profession and Code of Conduct for European Lawyers, covering the economic and governance side of lawyers’ responsibilities;
- iii) Environmental responsibilities (compliance and voluntary measures, such as the reduction of carbon footprint; electronic file keeping, waste management, etc.);
- iv) Social responsibilities (diversity, programmes for female professionals, social inclusion etc.);
- v) Governance (conflict of interest resolution mechanisms; confidentiality issues; firm policies against bribery and money laundering; insider trading guidelines; organizational structures for the implementation and compliance with these rules);
- vi) Supply chain management of law firms and bars and law societies;
- vii) *Pro bono* and community services; and
- viii) Philanthropy / charity.

In Portugal, the Bar Association has not developed (yet) any general guidance on how lawyers can contribute to the development of social responsibility, but it has highlighted the need that it should respect deontological rules.

In fact, according to the rules of the Portuguese Bar Association, lawyers are not allowed to identify the name of their clients (even if they are *pro bono* clients), as well as to make publicity for client acquisition.

In this context, the Portuguese Bar Association considers that, even if the identification of *pro bono* clients (in the law firm website, for example) could be understood as a reward for the commitment of lawyers in no profit activities – as a public recognition for the implementation of the values of social responsibility or even as an incentive to other lawyers work *pro bono* – such an identification opens the door to serious ethical questions, as it can serve the interests of publicity and client acquisition, which is forbidden by the lawyers' bar rules (according to a legal opinion published in 2009, available for consultation at the website www.oa.pt, only in portuguese).

Other Portuguese organizations, like GRACE – *Corporate Citizenship Reflection and Support Group* –, have already given an important contribution to the development of social responsibility by law firms in Portugal, through publications like “The Challenges and Opportunities of Corporate Social Responsibility in Law Firms”.

Despite the growing interest of representative organisations and the development of studies, in the last decades, regarding the relation between social responsibility and lawyers (for example, Farrow, 2008, Hutchinson, 2006, Whelan and Ziv, 2012, Spiesshofer, 2021, Gutterman, Walter, Miler and Cassidy 2019, Seck, Devlin and Quigg, 2021), our research reveals, though, that it is not possible to identify an agreed definition on social responsibility of lawyers in the academic world.

This is, however, similar to what happened, in the last decades, in what concerns the general concept of corporate social responsibility. In fact, as Wan-Jan (2006) already mentioned, despite the lack of a universally agreed definition on corporate social responsibility, private companies have been implementing their programs and integrating it into their business management.

The lack of academic advance in Portugal in what concerns social responsibility has not prejudiced, however, the development, by several big law firms, of social responsibility programs since the first decades of the 21st century (for example, Abreu Advogados; Cuatrecasas. DLA Piper ABBC, Garrigues, Linklaters, Morais Leitão, PLMJ, SRS Advogados, Vieira de Almeida, Sérvulo and Uria Menéndez Proença de Carvalho).

Actually, big law firms have developed, in the last decades, their own social responsibility policies and are now publishing annual reports on their websites covering, specially, *pro bono* and community giving and environmental matters.

In these annual reports, law firms also make some disclose on their motivations in undertaking social responsibility; which can be, firstly, associated to ethical responsibilities towards Society, (that go beyond the accomplishment of the mandate given by clients).

As already mentioned, besides their relations to clients – vital to lawyers – public interest of the profession demands the fulfilment of other obligations and responsibilities, like towards the community, law students, regulators, Government, academics and others.

Social commitment of lawyers is an essential part of lawyers' work in society in what concerns their mission in the protection of freedom, justice and human rights.

The importance of this dimension is well recognized in several legal instruments that regulate lawyers' role.

For instance, in 1990, the United Nations established the *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*, in order to assist member states in their task of promoting and ensuring the proper role of lawyers.

In this context, it was set forth that governments, professional associations of lawyers and educational institutions shall ensure that lawyers have appropriate education and training and be aware of ethical duties, human rights and fundamental freedoms recognized by national and international law (number 9 of the *Basic Principles*).

In what concerns their duties and responsibilities, it is set forth in this document that lawyers shall at all times maintain the honour and dignity of their profession as essential agents of the administrations of justice (number 12).

According to this *Basic Principles*, lawyers have important and relevant duties towards their clients, like advising them as to their legal rights and obligations, assisting in every appropriate way and taking legal action to protect their interests.

While protecting the rights of their clients and promoting the cause of justice, lawyers shall seek to uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms recognised by national and international law and shall at all times act freely and diligently in accordance with the law and recognized standards and ethics of the legal profession.

In this *Basic Principles* lawyers are considered to have an essential role in what concerns the administration of justice and therefore it must be guaranteed that they act with freedom and diligence, with respect to the laws and deontological rules recognised to the profession.

In the European field, it is important to mention the *Code of Conduct for European Lawyers*, established by the CCBE Plenary Sessions, on 19 may 2006.

According to this *Code of Conduct*, in a society founded on the respect for the rule of law, lawyers fulfil a special role which does not begin and end with the fulfilment of the clients' mandate.

Lawyers have a variety of legal and moral obligations, towards: clients, the courts and other authorities, other lawyers and professionals from this sector, the public for whom the existence of a free and independent profession is an essential means of safeguarding human rights in face of the power of the state and other interests in society.

In what concerns general principles, the *Code of Conduct* establishes: independence, trust and personal integrity, confidentiality, respect for the rules of other bars and law societies, incompatible occupations, personal publicity, the client's interest and limitation of lawyer's liability towards the client.

There are several principles set forth in what concerns the relation with clients, courts and between lawyers.

Still in the European context, it is important to mention that it is at discussion the approval of a *European Convention for lawyers*.

In fact, on the 24 January of 2018, the Parliamentary Assembly adopted a Recommendation on "The Case for Drafting a European Convention on the Profession of Lawyer" (Recommendation n.º 2121, 2018), in which it calls on the Organisation's Committee of Ministers to draw up and adopt a convention on the profession of lawyer.

In the national context, it should be mentioned that the Constitution for the Portuguese Republic (adopted in 1976, by Decree 10/04, with subsequent amendments) foresees, in article 20, that subject to the terms of the law, everyone has the right to legal information and advice, to legal counsel and to be accompanied by a lawyer before any authority.

It is, however, in the *Portuguese Bar Association Statutes* (approved by Law 145/2015, of 9 September, and last reviewed by Law 23/2020, of 6 July) that the role of lawyers is specially regulated, namely in what concerns duties towards community (article 90 of the Statutes).

Before that, however, it is in article 88 that lawyers are associated to an ethic conception, since it is considered that lawyers are essential to the administration of justice and therefore, they should have a public and professional behavior adequate to the dignity of the profession at stake.

Lawyers should, therefore, accomplish all duties established by the Portuguese Bar Association, as well as all that arise from general law and tradition. Honesty, integrity, loyalty and sincerity are considered to be professional obligations.

In what concerns duties towards the community, article 90 states that lawyers are obliged to defend rights, freedoms and guarantees, defending the good application of laws, prompt administration of justice and improvement of law institutions.

As it can be noted, legislative authorities have been worried to associate lawyers to an ethic-social dimension that goes beyond the simple defence of clients' interests; looking (also) after other intentions like the construction of a fairer society in social terms.

While the State has been strengthening its social role in the last decades, lawyers are also invited to evaluate their role on society, as drivers and promoters of social change.

As mentioned before, in the last decades the practice of law has been changing a lot and, along with it, lawyers need to adapt to new dimensions and (maybe) even more demanding tasks, as they overcame the (simple) application of law.

In this context, social purpose of lawyers has become an important part of lawyers contribution to a more fair and sustainable society.

Public interest related to the practice of law demands not only technical competence, but also a sense of commitment to the construction of a society that is more cohesive.

From lawyers it is expected that they are willing to fulfil their commitments towards clients, but also that they accept their special role in what concerns social responsibility.

Lawyers have become actors not only in the administration of justice, but also in the universe of social responsibility.

Regardless of the paper that belongs to the State, lawyers have to be associated to the effort of promoting a more fair and just society.

In this context, we can consider that programs of social responsibility of law firms shall reflect specific responsibilities of lawyers in regards to ethical standards, governance, environmental responsibilities, supply chain management, *pro bono* and community services; and philanthropy / charity.

Moreover, and bearing in mind what has already been mentioned about the concept of social responsibility, law firms must also pay attention to lawyers, since they are one of the most important stakeholder group, having high power, urgency, and legitimacy to influence the organisation.

The definition, by law firms, of initiatives that go beyond legal obligations are, therefore, indispensable, as they contribute for the increase of lawyers' engagement, attraction and retention.

By creating a good working environment and developing practices towards lawyers, law firms can expect higher motivation and productivity, especially when lawyers are, nowadays, seeking to practice law that "allow them to get home at night and on weekends, see their families, work full or part-time, practice in diverse and "alternative" settings, and generally pursue a meaningful career in the law rather than necessarily a total life in the law (Farrow, 2008).

Internal social responsibilities practices towards lawyers can, therefore, give law firms competitive advantages.

Questions like balance between work and private life, mental health, diversity and inclusion, and workplace harassment cannot be neglected by law firms, especially when compared to the attention paid to other dimensions of social responsibility.

As noted further bellow, in what concerns this dimension of social responsibility, few information is made available through annual reports of Vieira de Almeida law firm (which focus almost exclusively on *pro bono* legal assistance, citizenship education, third sector capacity building, corporate volunteering, internal campaigns and environmental sustainability) and for our research on this topic it was necessary to collect information through an interview held to the partner of the law firm that is responsible for social responsibility.

2.2 Social Innovation

2.2.1 Literature Review

Considering the purpose of the present study, our research also focuses on the concept of social innovation, as well as in the development of this concept by law firms.

In recent years, several authors have been reflecting on the relation between corporate social responsibility and innovation, as drivers of business growth (Rexhepia, Kurtishib and Bexheti, 2013).

For some, corporate social policies influence innovation (Halkos and Skouloudis, 2018) and the company's capacity for innovation is a necessary organizational factor for the implementation of corporate social responsibility (Kallanci, Rahmani and Toktay, 2018).

For others, however, innovation and corporate social innovation can influence each other (González-Ramos, Donate and Guadamillas, 2014).

Studies that focus on the relation between social responsibility and innovation have been analysing several issues, such as Corporate Social Innovation; Social Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Innovation.

In what concerns, more specifically, the concepts of social innovation, our research reveals that, although it has always been present in the evolution of the society, as a field of study (namely, in the social science area), social innovation does not have a long tradition.

In fact, innovation studies have begun in the economic field, namely with the work of Schumpeter (1942), who, in 1930, introduced the term "*social innovation*" to describe a process of creative destruction leading to the emergence of new combinations of resources in business, political and cultural environments.

Since Schumpeter, studies on innovation have advanced through different areas, such as management, technological studies, urban development and even in the law sector.

Innovation practices were first applied mostly to technological and industrial areas; but, with the development of the studies, new areas were covered, like social innovation, marketing innovation or administrative innovation.

The concept has been developed during the last decades, often through studies focused on various disciplines, but it was only since the last half of the twentieth century that social innovation has acquired greater importance and its concept has been specially studied.

Regardless of the developments observed in the field of social innovation, literature still remains dispersed through different fields and the concept of social innovation still can be found in different studies like management and social economy.

Since Schumpeter, there have been many attempts to define “*social innovation*” and until now there is not a commonly agreed definition of the term.

This may be the reflection of the fact that social innovation has predominantly emerged through practice and not so much as a result of academic work.

But, even in the academic field, and depending on the area of study, authors are not unanimous on what should be considered social innovation and emphasize different aspects of this concept.

Over the last decades, there has been a considerable increase in the studies on social innovation, with many researchers and academics contributing with their own definitions.

Regarding the definition of social innovation, we can highlight the following:

i) For Mulgan et al. (2006), “*social innovation refers to innovative activities and services that are motivated by the goal of meeting a social need and that are predominantly diffused through organizations whose primary purposes are social*”. Contrarily, “*business innovation is generally motivated by profit maximization and diffused through organizations that are primarily motivated by profit maximization*”;

ii) For Phills Jr, Deiglmeir and Miler (2008), social innovation relates to “*a novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals*”. From this point of view, a social innovation can be a product, production process or technology, but it can also be a principle, an idea, a piece of legislation, a social movement, an intervention or a combination of these. This concept of social innovation highlights the importance of increasing dialogue and bridges between different areas on behalf of the society as a whole;

iii) For Howaldt and Schwarz (2010), “*social innovation is new combination and/or new configuration of social practices in certain areas of action or social contexts prompted by certain actors or constellations of actors in an intentional targeted manner with the goal of better satisfying or answering needs and problems than is possible on the basis of established practices. An innovation is therefore social to the extent that it, conveyed by the market or “non/without profit”, is socially accepted and diffused widely throughout society or in certain societal sub-areas, transformed depending on circumstances and ultimately institutionalized as new social practice or made routine. As with every other innovation, “new” does not necessarily mean “good” but in this case is “socially desirable” in an extensive and normative sense*”;

iv) Westley and Antadze (2010) refer to social innovations as “a complex process of introducing new products, processes or programs that profoundly change the basic routines, resource and authority flows, or beliefs of the social system in which the innovation occurs”. These authors highlight that “social innovation does not necessarily involve a commercial interest, though it does not preclude such interest. More definitively, social innovation is oriented towards making a change at the systemic level”;

v) Murray, Caulier-Grice and Mulan (2010) define social innovations as “new ideas consisting of products, services, and models that simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relationships”;

vi) The European Commission (2020) considers that social innovation may “refer to a product, production process, idea, social movement or a combination of the above”;

vii) Cajaiba-Santana (2014) sustains a “more holistic view of the phenomenon of social innovation in which agentic actions and social structures can be conceived as both dualistic and interdependent”. In this “structuration perspective”, social innovation “is conceived as interactively influenced by both agents and social structures”. For this author, the adequacy of such a perspective is based on two pivotal characteristics of social innovation processes: First, social innovation is based on collective actions that take place inside a given social system, which are determined by underlying institutions. Second, the historical and cultural context in which social innovation occurs is an important consideration for understanding its processes since it is historically and culturally situated”;

viii) For Tracey and Stott (2017), “social innovation” - used to “describe a broad range of organizational and inter-organizational activity that is ostensibly designed to address the most deep-rooted problems of society, such as poverty, inequality and environmental degradation” – can be categorized according to different types: “social entrepreneurship” (for example, creating a venture), “social intrapreneurship” (which means addressing a social issue from the inside of an organization), and “social extrapreneurship” (mixture of peoples, ideas, resources that address social challenges);

As we can see, in academic literature, the definition of social innovation is not unanimous.

Some authors view social innovation mainly as a goal or an outcome.

That is the case, as we mentioned above, of Mulgan (2006) that defines social innovations as innovative activities or initiatives, motivated by the ambition or goal of meeting a certain social need.

From another point of view, other authors concentrate on the process of creating social change.

As we observed, Westley and Antadze (2010), for example, refer to social innovations as a process of designing or inventing products, processes, or programs which change certain aspects of the social system in which the innovation is implemented.

From this perspective, social innovations are defined as a means to an end, concentrating on the process of creating social change.

Some authors, however, adopt, nowadays, an integrated view of social innovation, considering that it should be seen both a means and an end.

From this perspective, social innovations include the use of social means to reach social goals creating both economic and social shared value.

Murray, Caulier-Grice and Mulan (2010), for instance, define social innovations as “*new ideas consisting of products, services, and models that simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relationships*”.

This perspective implies that social innovation has two dimensions: the process and the outcome.

From our point of view, this combined perspective is able to provide a most inclusive and comprehensive approach on the concept of social innovation.

2.2.2 Social Innovation in the Sector of Law firms

In what concerns the sector of law firms, we can say that, considering that social needs are not the core business of law firms, lawyers can impact on social innovation as partners and experts of clients who need legal assistance in that sector or as service providers to clients engaged in social impact (*pro bono* or not).

In fact, regardless of the initiatives promoted by law firms in which lawyers can be appointed as main actors of social innovations (through direct initiatives developed to tackle social challenges like social injustice or social inequality – the creation of a foundation with social purposes, for example –, law firms (and lawyers) can play an important role in the sector of social innovation, mainly, as partners or as service providers to clients engaged in social impact.

In this context, law firms and lawyers became a part of the architecture of social innovation and embrace the goal of “*doing good*” through social impact.

As Mulgan (2006) underlines, “*social innovation is not unique to the non-profit sector. It can be driven by politics and government (for example, new models of public health), markets (for example, open-source software or organic food), movements (for example, fair trade), and academia (for example, pedagogical models of childcare), as well as by social enterprises (microcredit and magazines for the homeless)*”.

Over the past decades, nonprofits organisations, governments, and private companies realized that the complexity of global problems, such as climate change and poverty, require integrated solutions, with the joining of different sectors of society.

For that reason, Mulgan (2006) highlights that social change depends on alliances between what could be called the “bees” and the “trees”: “*The bees are the small organizations, individuals and groups who have the new ideas, and are mobile, quick and able to cross-pollinate. The trees are the big organizations – governments, companies or big NGOs – which are poor at creativity but generally good at implementation, and which have the resilience, roots and scale to make things happen. Both need each other, and most social change comes from alliances between the two, just as most change within organizations depends on alliances between leaders and groups well down the formal hierarchy*”.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To carry out the present study, we used of a qualitative case study, since it allows a better understanding of the reality of social responsibility and social innovation at law firms, it consents the characterization of the specificities of such reality and it privileges a direct and interpretative approach.

Given the objectives of the present research, we chose Vieira de Almeida Law Firm as a leading example in the Portuguese market of big law firms, once it supports a different approach on how lawyers can (and should) act when practicing law; appealing for a practice with purpose.

With respect to the collection of data, we made use of the information that is available in the website of Vieira de Almeida Law Firm, especially the one about Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Innovation – www.vda.pt, under the separator *About Us, Responsible Business* – and particularly the annual reports, complemented by an interview held to the partner of the law firm who is responsible for the program of social responsibility (Margarida Couto), in the month of July 2020.

This interview was focused on the aspects of the program of social responsibility at Vieira de Almeida that are not fully described on the website of the law firm or that, to some extent, required clarification in what concerns the internal dimension of this program.

In what concerns social responsibility annual reports, it can be noted that they do not comply with rigid standards (such as the ones required by the *Global Reporting Initiative*, for example) and only synthesizes and make public information regarding the impact of Vieira de Almeida action on the community and on the environment.

In relation to environmental goals, this law firm also discloses (annually) a Carbon Footprint Report, including associated resource consumption levels.

4. CASE STUDY

4.1 The Law Firm

Vieira de Almeida Law Firm was founded in 1977, by its partner Vasco Vieira de Almeida and is, nowadays, a leading firm with a team of more than 440 professionals, including more than 300 lawyers, working in 21 practice areas.

The law firm has two offices in Portugal (Lisbon and Porto) and it works internationally in twelve jurisdictions through VdA Legal Partners (a network that connects lawyers and independent law firms associated with VdA to provide integrated legal services in both Portuguese and French-speaking Africa, as well as East Timor).

4.2 Culture and Values

In terms of culture and values, it results, in general, from the law firms' website, that lawyers are committed to:

- i)* Being ethical: lawyers should not only deliver a high-quality work to their clients, but also do it with integrity and respect for the clients and other colleagues;
- ii)* Exceeding the client's expectations: VdA wants to be seen as a real partner of the clients, turning their objectives into the lawyer's goals;
- iii)* Being innovative: the best solutions for the clients can demand innovative answers to their problems;
- iv)* Working as a team: one of the keys for success is working as a team, with accuracy and discipline, but in a relaxed and harmonious environment.

4.3 Social Responsibility

As most of the law firms in Portugal (and through the world), Vieira de Almeida Law Firm has begun its path in the field of social responsibility through *pro bono* legal services; which consist, primarily, in free legal services for those who need and cannot afford its payment.

This law firm considers that access to the law is fundamental for citizenship and social cohesion and lawyers must give their contribution to the community, placing their expertise at the service of those who cannot afford the payment of legal services.

However, through the years, this law firm felt the need to answer to different challenges that came from the organizations of the social economy (whether by assisting the capacity building of social organizations or providing *pro bono* legal support) as well as, from clients (specially, large enterprises), who were incorporating, at their management, strong programs of corporate social responsibility.

In fact, as many (or most) of the law firm clients started being involved in corporate social responsibility programs and law firms are also considered suppliers of services, it was realized, by many law firms, that there should be an alignment with their clients in what concerns corporate social responsibility policies.

Law firms started being requested to meet a certain standard of behavior regarding social corporate responsibility and, as a result, lawyers started developing their own programs of social responsibility.

In what concerns the history of social responsibility at Vieira de Almeida law firm, the *10 years of VdA's Pro Bono and Corporate Social Responsibility Report*, published in 2018, and the subsequent reports (2019 and 2020), highlights the following fundamental events:

- i) In 2008, Vieira de Almeida Law Firm institutionalized a program of *Pro Bono Legal Services* as well as a *Program of Corporate Volunteer*;
- ii) In the same year, this law firm also became a member of *BCSD Portugal – Business Council for Sustainable Development* (a non-profit organization which aggregates several enterprises that commit to the transition for sustainability);
- iii) In 2009, the *Green Project* – an environmental sustainability program – was introduced at the law firm;
- iv) Also, in this year, VdA became a member of *Grace – Corporate Citizenship Reflection and Support Group* – and made a partnership with *Entrajuda* and with the *Portuguese Foundations Centre*;
- v) In 2010, VdA introduced the *Carbon Offsetting Program* and participated in the *European Year of the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion*;
- vi) In 2011, the first *Carbon Footprint Report* was published;
- vii) In 2012, VdA became a member of the *Legal Sustainability Alliance* (a group constituted by several law firms with the objective to share sustainable practices);
- viii) In 2013, the first edition of the *Spring School* was promoted to support youth employability;
- ix) In 2015, two social enterprises were created “powered” by VdA (*Social Help* and *Blindesign*);
- x) In 2016, *Vasco Vieira de Almeida Foundation* was established and the law firm made a partnership with the *Girl Move Academy*;

xi) In 2017, VdA joined the United Nations Global Compact and signed a protocol with Mozambique's Nacional Park: Education of Vulnerable Project;

xii) In 2018, VdA was elected President of Grace's Steering Committee and created a Social Economy Practice Area;

xiii) In 2019, the law firm promoted the United Nations Agenda to 2030, aiming to contribute for the achievement of the objectives of sustainable development;

*xiv) In 2020, in the context of the pandemic brought by Covid-19, VdA participated, through the VdA Foundation and with the support of several partners, in the crowdfunding campaign *Liga-te@Escola* (a project through which it was possible to purchase 70 computers, that were distributed to several public schools to guarantee remote schooling) and organized a series of free webinars for its *pro bono* clients and other social sector partners to clarify numerous legislative measures that were approved by the Portuguese government in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic (providing a record level of *pro bono* legal services – almost 9000 hours).*

*xv) Also, in 2020, VdA launched a competition *Encontro com Impacto*, through which bridges were built between companies and innovation/social entrepreneurship which already had a close relationship with VdA (the winner of the competition was the *Organization 55+*, which has the mission of empowering professionally inactive people 55 years or older, using an innovative approach);*

xvi) In the same year, the law firm deepened its commitment to reduce carbon emissions by consuming electricity exclusively from renewable sources across all facilities;

*xvii) In 2020, VdA also joined the *SDG Ambition Program of the United Nations Global Compact*, adopted the global *United Nations Women's Empowerment Principles* and joined the *Target Gender Equality Project* (giving focus on the *SDG 5*).*

Through its website, Vieira de Almeida Law Firm affirms its commitment to be a socially responsible firm, which takes into account the interests of both its internal and external stakeholders, in particular towards the Community and the Planet.

According to the information provided by the website, the main pillars of VdA's Responsibility and Sustainability Programme are:

- i) Networking and Partnerships (cooperation and networking are considered to be key mechanisms to implement projects that address the needs of the Communities in which the law firm operates and promote human rights protection and capacity building for active citizenship);*
- ii) Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship (in the last years, VdA has assisted in the development and strengthening of numerous projects in the area of social innovation, social entrepreneurship and social investment); and*
- iii) Involvement (through the *Pro Bono* Programme, the Green Project and the Corporate Volunteering Programme, all workers are able to accomplish their personal and social goals and to exercise their civic rights, within the firm and as part of the work carried out with partners).*

4.4 The External Dimension of Social Responsibility at Vieira de Almeida Law Firm

In what concerns the external dimension of social responsibility, Vieira de Almeida Law Firm has been developing its work towards:

4.4.1 The Community:

a) Through *pro bono* work

Through the last decades, VdA has been cooperating with numerous third sector organizations, providing legal services focused on innovation and social entrepreneurship projects.

For example, VdA has cooperated with the organization *Teach for Portugal*, which is a pioneering project in the field of education, developed under the aegis of the international organization *Teach for All*.

This non-governmental organization operates by identifying and hiring recent graduates with strong leadership potential to act as mentors, in the classroom context, at schools in Portugal's most disadvantaged communities for a period of two years, with a view to improving the students' capacity for learning.

Vasco Vieira de Almeida Foundation supports *Teach for Portugal* as a social investor, in the context of the *Parcerias para o Impacto* (Partnerships for Impact), a tool of the European Fund Portugal Social Innovation, while VdA provides it with comprehensive *pro bono* services.

Another example of *pro bono* services is the collaboration provided to the *World Wide Web Foundation* – an organization created by Tim Berners-Lee in the context of the “*Contract for the Web*” project –, in the field of telecommunications and technology.

The main objective of the *World Wide Web Foundation* is to help democratize the access to knowledge and internet in developing countries and, consequently, contribute to promoting human rights and improve conditions in health, employment, education and citizenship.

b) Education to Citizenship

According to its statutes, education for citizenship is the key mission of Vasco Vieira de Almeida Foundation, which seeks to “*develop and implement activities that promote the construction of a more informed, integrated and inclusive society and a heightened sense of civic responsibility, using education, knowledge and culture as vehicles to uphold human rights and the rule of law*”.

One example of this investment in education is the *Professor Francisco Vieira de Almeida Award: Promoting education and knowledge to build a more informed and inclusive society*, in partnership with the Faculty of Arts of the University of Lisbon (FLUL), with the aim of fostering research and contributing to the advancement of knowledge.

c) Third Sector Capacity Building

As an example of this third sector capacity building, we can mention the collaboration of Vasco Vieira de Almeida Foundation with the *Portuguese Foundations Centre* and with *GRACE*, in the organization of the conference “*Corporate Foundations: Agents of Change*”.

d) Corporate Volunteering

As we mentioned before, corporate volunteering is encouraged by VdA as a form of collectively exercising citizenship, allowing all workers (and not only lawyers) the chance to participate in the tackling of social and environmental challenges.

Most initiatives are organized in partnership with other entities that pursue a relevant social or environmental mission.

For instance, VdA annually participates in *GIRO*, the biggest corporate volunteering initiative in Portugal, which is organized by GRACE and mobilizes around 1000 volunteers from dozens of member companies.

Another example that can be highlighted is the partnership between VdA and the *Girl MOVE Academy*; a project that intends to give women access to job opportunities and the possibility to become leaders and agents of positive change.

VdA participated in two of its three programs: *BELIEVE Programme*, through which VdA lawyers and staff raised enough money to fund 180 scholarships for socially vulnerable Mwarusi girls living in the north of Mozambique (therefore ensuring that they remain in school for another academic year); and *CHANGE Program*, focused on leadership and social entrepreneurship.

4.4.2 Environmental Sustainability

As mentioned before, VdA is a member of BCSD, a business association that is part of the global network of the *World Business Council for Sustainable Development*, which brings together forward-thinking companies working together to accelerate the transition to a more sustainable world.

Since 2011, this law firm is also a member of the *Legal Sustainability Alliance*, an international organization of law firms committed to promoting and adopting environmentally sustainable practices in their activity.

Vieira de Almeida is also a member of the United Nations Global Compact and has joined the SDG Ambition Programme, through which the law firm committed to actively contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

4.5 The Internal Dimension of Social Responsibility at Vieira de Almeida Law Firm

According to the information collected through the website and the interview held with the lawyer responsible for the program of social responsibility, Vieira de Almeida Law Firm is committed in providing lawyers (and other workers) excellent working conditions in terms of facilities and equipment; promoting, simultaneously, ethical purposes through volunteering initiatives, internal campaigns and *pro bono* work.

Moreover, this law firm considers that to provide a high-quality service to their clients it is essential to provide a good environment to their workers, through team spirit, humor and informality.

In relation to lawyers, we can mention the following aspects:

- All lawyers participate in volunteer actions promoted by the law firm;
- VdA has founded, in 2009, an academy to provide legal training, as well as training in management and soft skills development (*VdA Academy*);
- *Pro bono* work is accounted for lawyers in all aspects, including annual objectives;
- Balance between professional and personal life is taken into account and several measures have been adopted towards this goal, like working hours flexibilization and remote working (it is recognized, however, that this is a difficult subject considering the constraints that arise from the need to fulfil deadlines);
- Paternity protection: although it is not legal binding, VdA pays parental leave to lawyers and, in the first year of children, working hours are reduced with no impact on payment;

- Gender equality: VdA pays serious attention to this topic and has elected gender equality as a development sustainability objective to work during 2021 (in VdA there are several women already partners of the law firm);
- Guidelines to prevent harassment at the work place: VdA has approved an *Ethical Conduct Code*;
- Working rewards: there are several mechanisms regarding the reward of best workers including money rewards and career development;
- Health and safety at work place: this is a subject of concern at VdA for all workers (for example, lawyers have the right to a health insurance);
- Adaptation to change: in difficult times, efforts are made to prevent, for example, the dismissal of workers (for example, during pandemic time, it was decided not to dismiss any workers).

In what concerns the internal environmental sustainability:

- The environmental component of VdA's Corporate Social Responsibility Programme is developed through its *Green Project*, which annually promotes a set of internal measures targeting sustainable development, eco-efficiency and carbon footprint reduction;
- Vieira de Almeidas' new office in Lisbon – where more than 90% of the Firm's lawyers and staff are based – integrates several measures designed to improve environmental performance.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this Chapter, we intend to discuss and interpret the results of our research.

As mentioned before, we pretended to explore if (and how) a big law firm, like Vieira de Almeida Law Firm, can adjust and accommodate the general framework regarding social responsibility and social innovation to the specific responsibilities (and needs) of lawyers.

In general, the findings of the present study are consistent with our initial expectations.

From the research conducted, it is possible to note, firstly, that Vieira de Almeida Law Firms has developed, especially in the last two decades, a solid program of social responsibility and encouraged the promotion of social innovation actions, aligning different interests and agents and contributing for the development and dissemination of this area (for example, through the support of nonprofit civil society organizations).

In what concerns the different dimensions of social responsibility (internal and external), our research reveals that Vieira de Almeida law firm has been focusing on two distinct elements of social responsibility: i) responsibilities towards the community (with special focus on *pro bono* legal assistance, citizenship education, third sector capacity building, corporate volunteering, internal campaigns); ii) and environmental sustainability.

Others dimensions, like the internal dimension towards lawyers and other employees of the firm – which should include aspects regarding, for example, recruitment and career progression, diversity and inclusion, prevention of sexual harassment, as well as training and work-life balance

– have not (yet) been object of report from the law firm and practices regarding these subjects remain almost unknown for other stakeholders.

In relation to motivations beyond the practice of social responsibility by Vieira de Almeida Law Firm, our findings, in relation to culture and values of this law firm, reveal a commitment with ethical values and sustainability.

In fact, it is assumed, at the website, that, since lawyers play an essential role in ensuring access to justice, it is believed that big firms such as VdA, have an increased responsibility to ensure the effective exercise of civic rights.

For all members of the law firm, social responsibility is a way to accomplish their personal and social goals and to exercise their civic rights within the firm.

Simultaneously, social responsibility allows the reduction of environmental impact and a more sustainable performance

The goal of social justice and sustainability has, therefore, been embraced, at Vieira de Almeida Law Firm, through the integration of social demands and the aim to articulate actions that seek to overcome social problems and to improve quality of life in several communities (even outside Portugal) and through the reduction of environmental impact.

Regardless of the motivations that are recognized explicitly by the law firm to be at the core of social responsibility, it is possible, however, to note that the integration, by Vieira de Almeida, of such a solid program of social responsibility and innovation, contributes, simultaneously, to:

- i) The strengthening of the relations established with stakeholders, especially corporate clients, which, mainly, have incorporated social responsibility programs at their organisations;
- ii) Competitive advantage towards other law firms (which can also feel encouraged to develop social responsibility programs);
- iii) Withstand to external pressures (specially in times of crises and exposition to *media* cases);
- iv) Reinforcement of network; and
- v) Talents' attraction (lawyers and other workers who identify themselves with the values and culture supported by VdA).

In this context, social responsibility and social innovation allows Vieira de Almeida law firm not only to integrate social demands and ethical values, but also to meet objectives that can contribute to wealth creation and long-term profits

Regarding this subject, we can recall what Garriga and Melé (2004) point out about the different theories that justify the integration of social responsibility.

According to these authors, corporate social responsibility can be classified under four groups: 1) instrumental theories (it is assumed that the corporation is an instrument for wealth creation and that this is its sole social responsibility; social activities are accepted only if they are consistent with wealth creation); 2) political theories (according to which the social power of corporation is emphasized, specifically in its relationship with society and its responsibility in the political arena associated with this power); 3) integrative theories (it is considered that business should integrate social demands, since its continuity and growth depends on society); and 4) ethical theories (it is understood that the relationship between business and society is embedded with ethical values

and, therefore, firms should accept social responsibilities as an ethical obligation above any other consideration).

These four dimensions (which relate to profits, political performance, social demands and ethical values) need to be integrated into a new theory on the business and society relationship.

The concept of Business and Society relationship should, therefore, include four dimensions - instrumental, political, integrative and ethical – and some connection among them must exist: “a proper concept of the business and society relationship should include these four aspects or dimensions, and some mode of integration of them” and “most of current CSR theories are focused on four main aspects: (1) meeting objectives that produce long-term profits, (2) using business power in a responsible way, (3) integrating social demands and (4) contributing to a good society by doing what is ethically correct” (Garriga and Melé, 2004).

Despite the positive aspects that were mentioned above, our study reveals, however, some fragilities in what concerns the program of social responsibility of this law firm, like the lack of certification in what concerns social responsibility and the fact that limited information is divulged about internal social responsibility (namely in relation to lawyers).

On the other hand, Vieira de Almeida reports do not detail how stakeholders (like clients, lawyers and other support staff, law students, regulators, Government, academics, suppliers and others) contribute for the definition of the program of social responsibility and what is the unifying factor that links the choice of the initiatives to be integrated and developed by the law firm.

Furthermore, reports on corporate social responsibility do not publicize what is included on *pro bono* legal work and what is the impact of it on the people and institutions that the law firm advises (for example, from the more than 8000 of hours spent on *pro bono* work in 2020, which were targeted to legal assistance at courts or legal advice to organizations from the third sector and public institutions).

6. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This chapter provides conclusions, followed by limitations of the present study, implications and possible directions for future researches.

As set up in the introduction, the main goal of the present research was to understand how Vieira de Almeida Law Firm has adjusted and accommodated the general framework regarding social responsibility and social innovation to meet specific responsibilities (and needs) of lawyers.

From the research conducted, and summarily, it is important to note that Vieira de Almeida law firm has been building a solid program of corporate social responsibility towards the community (that goes far beyond the traditional *pro bono* and charitable giving) and the environment and has become an important driver of social innovation.

In fact, in what concerns the external dimension of social responsibility towards the community and the environment, it is undeniable that this law firm promotes regularly a large set of measures – namely in relation to *pro bono* legal assistance, citizenship education, third sector capacity building, corporate volunteering, internal campaigns and environmental sustainability.

These initiatives meet the specific responsibilities of lawyers in what concerns the administration of justice and their duties towards the community (as mentioned before, lawyers shall defend rights, freedoms and guarantees, the good application of laws, the prompt administration of justice and the improvement of law institutions).

Furthermore, the link between corporate social responsibility and social innovation at this law firm can be considered as a distinctive characteristic of this law firm, since, as results from the present study, it is possible to identify several initiatives that serve simultaneously the objective of social responsibility and social innovation (for example, the creation of the Vieira de Almeida Foundation, the promotion of the *Spring School* to support youth employability, the support given to social enterprises or the partnerships established with several social organizations, like the *Girl Move Academy*).

In what concerns the internal dimension of social responsibility, we can conclude, however, that, until present time, limited information has been publicized by Vieira de Almeida Law Firm (at their website or at their social responsibility reports), especially in relation to lawyers (for example, about work life balance or diversity and inclusion).

For this reason – and even if Vieira de Almeida Law Firm is paying the necessary attention to the internal dimension of social responsibility in what concerns lawyers (as it results from the interview that was held to the partner of the law firm who is responsible for the program of social responsibility) –, it is not possible to draw a clear conclusion on how lawyers' needs are being met by the program of social responsibility.

Nevertheless, it is unquestionable that this law firm became an important player in the integration of social demands through social responsibility and social innovation.

To sum up, and coming back to our initial questions about the engagement of law firms with social responsibility and social innovation, we can note that Vieira de Almeida Law Firm has developed, in the last decades, a program of social responsibility (with impact on social innovation) not as a common private company but considering the essential responsibilities that can be appointed to lawyers in ensuring access to justice and the effective exercise of civic rights.

In relation to the internal dimension of social responsibility, however, annual reports of Vieira de Almeida Law Firm do not publicize information regarding lawyers – namely what are the commitments of this law firm towards these professional and if they have been successfully achieved – and not detail if (and how) lawyers have contributed for the definition of the program of social responsibility.

These conclusions may contribute for a better understanding of social responsibility (and social innovation) in law firms, inspiring academics to further studies on this area and encouraging practitioners to the development of social responsibility programs or to the improvement and adjustment of these programs in line with the outcomes that were presented in the present research.

Naturally, these outcomes cannot be generalized, since other (big) law firms might have different approaches to social responsibility, in what concerns, for example, the nature of the responsibilities that should be assumed by law firms.

On the other hand, particular circumstances of each law firm (like client's profile, international presence of the law firm, areas of legal practice, among others) may determine different results.

Therefore, and due to the nature of the present study – based on the case study of Vieira de Almeida Law firm – different results can be achieved when applied to other law firms.

In addition to this, it should be noted that some limitations of the present study arise, in what concerns the internal dimension of social responsibility of lawyers, from the circumstance that few information was available in the website of the law firm and only from the interview held to the partner responsible for social responsibility it was possible to gather important data on this topic.

Subsequent to this, however, there were no further interviews in order to understand the impact of the measures that have been promoted, by the law firm, in relation to lawyers.

Considering the results of the present research and its limitations, future studies could be carried out for a better understanding of social responsibility and social innovation at law firms, namely, if law firms should be more strategic in what concerns the selection of causes to support, if they should reveal a unifying factor that links the choice of initiatives (considering, for example, the main practice areas of the law firm or the industries to which legal services are provided), what is the impact of social responsibility on lawyers or to what extent law firms can (or should) be constrained in the development and promotion of social responsibility (namely through regulation of social responsibility by the Lawyers' Bar Association) and in which direction those programs should be delineated (either to alleviate legal needs of the society or for other purposes).

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