



InspiraLaw 2026: 30 Swiss female role models

On: running towards legal excellence

GC Julie Pender: the legal engine behind the company's growth





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From leading local or global law firms to heading the legal functions of major companies, here are the women who are reshaping Switzerland's legal market with strategic vision and leadership

by claudia la via


In a legal market defined by cross-border complexity, regulatory intensity and constant transformation, Switzerland's profession is being reshaped every day by leaders who combine technical authority with strategic vision. With our first edition of *InspiraLaw* Switzerland, MAG spotlights 30 women who made the difference in 2025 and who are influencing the Swiss legal landscape - from partners steering leading law firms in Zurich, Geneva, Basel and beyond, to general counsel and legal directors guiding major companies and institutions through governance, risk and change.

Their careers reflect the breadth of Swiss practice: advising on sophisticated transactions and disputes, navigating investigations and compliance challenges, and supporting innovation in highly regulated sectors such as finance, healthcare, infrastructure, technology and energy. Many are also driving smarter ways of delivering legal services - embracing new operating models, digital tools and multidisciplinary collaboration - while keeping independence, quality and judgment at the centre of their work.

But *InspiraLaw* was born with a purpose that goes beyond recognising "power". It is designed to highlight role models: professionals whose choices, leadership and consistency can inspire other women - and the wider legal community - to imagine the profession in a more modern, open and inclusive way. These are also women who, in different ways, work for other women: they believe in female leadership and have often taken on roles where they could sponsor, mentor and elevate others - building pathways, opening doors and making space for the next generation

to advance with confidence. Influence, in this sense, is not only about titles or mandates. It is also about shaping culture, setting standards and leading by example.

MAG has chosen 30 names — and therefore 30 stories. What follows, however, is not a ranking and it is not a competition. These profiles are presented in strict alphabetical order and focus on the most significant developments, achievements and responsibilities of the past year — the milestones that, in our view, make each of these women a reference point others can look to for inspiration.

There is still a long road ahead. Yet these professionals are among those who have already started to raise the pace and the bar, showing how excellence and inclusion can move forward together at the heart of the Swiss legal market. 

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Tina Balzli
 CMS

Partner and head of fintech & blockchain at CMS Switzerland (Zurich) since 2021, she advises banks, fintechs and investors on licensing, tokenisation, crypto products and DLT infrastructures, turning fast-moving regulation into workable product and governance frameworks. Clients rely on her for practical, business-ready guidance when innovation meets supervisory scrutiny. Whether guiding clients through FINMA licensing processes, structuring finance products or advising on the legal design of novel business models, she combines technical precision with a strategic, innovation-focused mindset.



Maria-Antonella Bino
 Vontobel

Member of Vontobel's executive committee and group general counsel, leading legal & compliance for the Zurich-based investment firm. With experience across prosecution and senior roles in international banking, she steers governance, regulatory strategy and cross-border transactions, partnering closely with the board on conduct and risk. Her focus: rigorous oversight without slowing execution.



Stephanie Bregy
 SBB

Group general counsel and head of legal & compliance at Swiss Federal Railways (SBB). She leads the legal function for one of Switzerland's largest public companies, supporting infrastructure, procurement and transformation programmes and their public-law interfaces. Her remit spans governance, contracting, disputes and compliance—bringing legal certainty to complex, long-horizon projects. With her role she shows that compliance doesn't sit in a function: compliance is the business of the business.



Sandra De Vito Bieri
 Bratschi

Managing partner of Bratschi, leading a partner-based firm of 50+ partners while remaining a reference name in litigation, arbitration and internal investigations. She is trusted for high-stakes commercial disputes and crisis mandates, combining strategic calm with persuasive advocacy. Her leadership reflects a modern approach to firm strategy, talent and culture. Known for clarity under pressure.



Andrea Giger
 Niederer Kraft Frey

Partner at Niederer Kraft Frey, focused on public and private M&A, capital markets and corporate finance. Frequently leading landmark mandates, she co-led the firm's team advising SMG Swiss Marketplace Group on its 2025 IPO on SIX. Clients value her deal discipline, speed and ability to coordinate issuers, banks and stakeholders across multiple jurisdictions under tight timetables. She also handles broader ECM mandates.



Sandrine Giroud

Lalive

Partner at Lalive in Geneva, specialising in domestic and international litigation, financial disputes, fraud and asset recovery, white-collar crime and sanctions. Since April 2024 she has served as President of the Geneva Bar Association, championing professional independence and the rule of law. She also founded the Geneva International Legal Association (GILA), promoting Geneva as a global legal hub. She continues to act in landmark disputes.



Karin Graf

Vischer

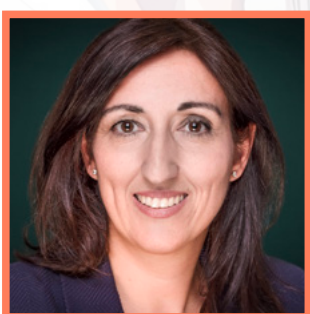
Partner at Vischer and a seasoned litigator and arbitrator in complex domestic and cross-border disputes. Since January 2025 she has been president of the Zurich Bar Association, where she promotes high professional standards and a future-focused agenda on ethics, training and diversity. Her leadership combines technical rigour with pragmatic, collaborative advocacy and a strong sense of fairness. Known for balanced tactics and clear strategy.



Karen Hale

Novartis

Chief legal & compliance officer of Novartis and member of the executive committee. She oversees global legal, compliance and governance for a highly regulated life-sciences group, with deep experience in litigation risk, antitrust and major transactions. A trusted adviser to senior leadership and the board, she is also known for building strong teams and investing in legal talent development worldwide. She promotes strong governance and culture.



Petra Hanselmann

Pestalozzi

Senior partner at Pestalozzi in Zurich, leading the Corporate/M&A group. She advises on private equity, carve-outs and cross-border acquisitions, guiding clients through deal structuring, negotiations and post-closing integration. Her recent mandates include prominent international transactions in energy and industrial sectors. Known for calm, commercial judgement, she delivers clarity when speed, certainty and stakeholder alignment matter most. She is frequently chosen for sponsor-led processes where governance, negotiation and speed must work together without surprises.



Stéphanie Hodara El Bez

Altenburger Ltd legal + tax

Managing partner of Altenburger Ltd legal + tax and head of its banking & finance team. With a dual background in finance and IP, she advises on regulated finance, lending and innovation-driven projects at the intersection of business and compliance. Active in corporate governance, she joined the board of directors of Banque Internationale à Luxembourg in 2025—recognition of her standing in Swiss financial law leadership. She is also active on boards, bringing a governance lens to strategic finance decisions and regulated-business oversight.



Claudia Keller

Wenger Vieli

Partner at Wenger Vieli with a strong focus on data protection, IP and technology transactions, advising corporates, startups and founders. Being a partner for more than a decade, she is known for pragmatic solutions on digital products, cloud and SaaS contracting, platform terms and privacy-by-design programmes. Her background includes years at Vischer, and she remains a go-to adviser for companies scaling in Switzerland and Europe. Her practice is strong where Swiss and EU requirements overlap, helping teams stay compliant across jurisdictions.



Pascale Köster

Walder Wyss

Partner at Walder Wyss and a leading name in white-collar crime and investigations. She advises corporates, executives and financial institutions in sensitive regulatory and criminal proceedings, often with cross-border enforcement angles. As chair of the Swiss chapter of the Women's White Collar Defense association. She supports visibility, excellence and mentoring in the profession - while remaining a trusted crisis adviser when reputations are on the line. Discreet and strategic, she helps manage sensitive fact patterns, interviews and communications while proceedings unfold.



Barbara Levi

UBS

UBS group general counsel since 2021 and member of the group executive board. With experience across banking, pharmaceuticals and mining, she shapes global legal strategy, governance and risk management for one of Europe's most scrutinised financial institutions. Her mandate spans complex regulatory interactions, strategic transactions and board governance—ensuring legal judgment supports growth while reinforcing ethical conduct and accountability. She aligns legal, risk and business priorities under heightened regulatory attention.



Tanja Luginbühl

Lenz & Staehelin

Long-standing partner at Lenz & Staehelin and head of the Insolvency & Restructuring group. She advises on restructurings, insolvency proceedings and distressed M&A, bringing technical depth and stakeholder management to matters where time pressure is high. Her expertise also covers private clients and complex corporate situations, making her a key figure when businesses and owners need coordinated solutions across legal disciplines. She is a key adviser when restructurings require rapid coordination across creditors, courts and management under pressure.



Karin Mülchi

Bridge legal group

Founder and Ceo of Bridge legal group, a boutique launched in 2024 dedicated to legal tech and legal operations. After five years at Schellenberg Wittmer, she now supports legal departments and firms on legal-tech strategy, tool selection and implementation and process redesign. Her focus is practical: helping teams measure value, improve delivery and create data-driven legal functions without losing quality or judgment. Her work focuses on measurable outcomes better workflows, stronger data and tools that lawyers actually use in day-to-day practice.



Simone Nadelhofer

Schellenberg Wittmer

Partner at Schellenberg Wittmer in Investigations, Risk & Governance, advising on internal investigations, regulatory enforcement and business crime. Appointed vice chair of the IBA Business Crime Committee in January 2025, she contributes to international dialogue on integrity and cross-border cooperation. Clients turn to her for principled, pragmatic counsel under scrutiny—especially where governance, reputational risk and multi-authority exposure intersect. She contributes to the global compliance debate, bringing Swiss precision to enforcement trends.



Jennifer Piconi

Lindt & Sprüngli

Group general counsel and corporate secretary at Lindt & Sprüngli. Since joining in 2007, she has built and led the group's legal, compliance and IP functions, supporting global growth, brand protection and complex transactions, including major international acquisitions. She is valued for sharp governance instincts and a modern approach to risk—balancing commercial agility with the discipline expected of a listed global consumer brand. She is recognised for integrating legal, compliance and IP into one coherent operating model that supports fast execution.



Fabienne-Anne Rehulka

SIX

Group general counsel at SIX, Switzerland's financial-market infrastructure provider. She leads a 40+ team across Switzerland, Spain, the UK and France, advising on governance, regulation, M&A, antitrust and data protection. A strategic partner to the board, she helps steer compliance and innovation in a highly regulated environment—strengthening SIX's role at the centre of trading, payments and financial data for the Swiss market. Her leadership balances innovation with control—an essential skill set in market infrastructure and regulated data services.



Essi Rimali

Harting

Appointed group general counsel at Harting in August 2025. She leads global legal strategy for the technology group, covering commercial matters, compliance and enterprise risk, and is recognised for building high-performing international teams. Her recent move highlights her influence in Switzerland's tech legal community, combining business partnership with a strong culture of empowerment and accountability across functions. She is valued for simplifying complexity so guidance is actionable for engineers, sales teams and leadership across regions.



Katja Roth Pellanda

Zurich Insurance

Group general counsel of Zurich Insurance since 2020, overseeing global legal, regulatory and governance matters. Her career spans corporate law, M&A and capital markets, including senior roles at Novartis and Bär & Karrer. As a board-level partner, she supports transformation initiatives while keeping accountability, conduct and risk discipline front and centre in a global insurer operating under constant regulatory change. She also holds board mandates within the group, reinforcing her influence at the intersection of legal oversight and business direction.



Jasprit Sahnsi

DKSH

General counsel at DKSH, supporting the group's Switzerland-headquartered operations across Asia and beyond. She leads on governance, commercial contracting and compliance, partnering closely with business leaders on strategic projects, investigations and risk. Known for a commercially grounded style, she helps translate complex cross-border requirements into clear decisions and scalable processes — keeping execution moving while safeguarding the group's integrity and licence to operate. Her leadership is pragmatic and collaborative, focused on consistent standards across regions.



Anne-Véronique Schlaepfer

White & Case

Founder and managing partner of White & Case Switzerland since launching the office in 2015. A leading figure in international arbitration, she acts in complex commercial, investment and regulatory disputes with multi-jurisdictional angles. Under her leadership, the Geneva platform has become a benchmark for global advocacy and arbitration talent development—strengthening Switzerland's role as a premier seat for high-value proceedings. She has invested in mentoring and knowledge-building, reinforcing Geneva's attractiveness for international disputes.



Susanne Schreiber

Bär & Karrer

Managing partner of Bär & Karrer and co-head of the Tax department. She advises on cross-border corporate taxation, M&A and reorganisation planning, capital markets and financing structures, often for sophisticated international groups. In recent years she played a pivotal role in matters linked to the UBS–Credit Suisse integration. Recognised for precision and strategic clarity, she helps align tax with business realities in the market's most complex deals. She is valued for spotting sensitivities early, keeping structures robust under scrutiny attention.



Andrea Sieber

MLL Legal

She advises on restructurings, insolvency proceedings and distressed M&A, bringing technical depth and stakeholder management to matters where time pressure is high. Her expertise also covers private clients and complex corporate situations, making her a key figure when businesses and owners need coordinated solutions across legal disciplines. She is a key adviser when restructurings require rapid coordination across creditors, courts and management under pressure.



Ingrid Sollerer

Sandoz

General counsel and chief compliance officer at Sandoz, after a remarkable career within the group. She leads global legal and compliance across business development, licensing, M&A, antitrust, litigation and regulatory matters. Known for cross-functional leadership, she helps align ethical governance with the company's healthcare access mission—supporting innovation in generics and biosimilars while ensuring robust compliance in a complex global environment. She is a strong advocate of effective compliance programmes, aligning policy with operational reality across markets.



Luana Stämpfli

Kellerhals Carrard

Luana is partner at Kellerhals Carrard since November 2025, after years at Bär & Karrer. She focuses on M&A and private equity, advising investors and corporates on Swiss and cross-border transactions - from due diligence and structuring to negotiations and closing. Her recent promotion reflects her standing as a rising deal leader, valued for sharp execution, commercial pragmatism and the ability to keep momentum in competitive processes. She is known for a hands-on, detail-oriented style that keeps diligence findings, documentation and negotiation tightly aligned.



Eva-Maria Strobel

Baker McKenzie

Zurich-based partner heading Baker McKenzie's Swiss IP practice, and since July 2025 Chair of the firm's EMEA Commercial, Data, IP, Technology & Trade group. She advises global companies on IP strategy, brand protection, licensing and tech deals, often where data, digitalisation and regulation collide. Clients rely on her to turn complex IP and tech risk into business-enabling decisions across multiple jurisdictions. She coordinates multi-jurisdiction teams, keeping IP and data strategies consistent across markets.



Anja Vogt

5Gambit

Anja is co-founder of 5Gambit, the disputes boutique with offices in Zurich and New York. She advises on international arbitration and complex contentious matters, combining Swiss precision with a strongly cross-border practice. Her work reflects a modern, agile model of high-end advocacy built around partner-led teams, strategic focus and deep sector understanding, supporting clients through high-stakes disputes with clarity and pace. She is also part of a new wave of boutique leadership, proving that focused platforms can compete at the highest level.



Barbara Wälchli

Swisscom

After years at Galenica, Barbara Wälchli has recently become general counsel (head of legal) at Swisscom. With deep expertise in regulatory, competition, commercial matters and corporate governance, she supports management on strategic issues and high-impact projects in a sector under intense scrutiny. She is valued for thinking beyond traditional frameworks and translating regulatory complexity into operational decisions, enabling innovation and growth while maintaining rigorous compliance and risk discipline.



Annette Weber

Advestra

Partner at Advestra since 2021, after many years at Bär & Karrer. She is a recognised specialist in M&A and capital markets, leading Swiss and cross-border transactions and advising issuers, banks and sponsors on complex deal structures. With extensive experience across headline mandates, she is known for hands-on leadership, crisp execution and the ability to steer negotiations toward practical outcomes under demanding timelines. She is valued for combining capital-markets expertise with M&A execution, especially in listed-company contexts.