

New look marks 10 years of Paris Arbitration Week

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When it returns next month, a refreshed and rebranded Paris Arbitration Week will enter its second decade with a renewed focus on community.

Visiting Paris in the spring has become a rite of passage for the arbitration community. The charms of the City of Light are many, but over the past decade, the world's leading arbitration lawyers have made an annual pilgrimage to Paris Arbitration Week (PAW), probably the biggest and most revered event of its type, even as similar weeks have proliferated around the globe.

This year's edition, from 23-27 March, marks the event's [10th anniversary](#) with new branding and an expanded opening gala. "The idea is to refresh the image, of course, but it's also a launch into the next 10 years," says Marion Gady, a managing director at FTI Consulting and a member of the PAW board. That does not mean a change in the week's core principles, however: "We didn't want people to feel like PAW had lost its DNA. The goal remains the same, to grow and to gather as many participants as possible and to help people connect and interact."

The committee gives participating organisations freedom to organise their sessions as they see fit. "It reflects the evolution of arbitration," says Astrid Westphalen, international arbitration counsel at Gide and PAW vice president. "If you look at the calendar, it's what people think will be of interest this year," and this year's agenda reflects and highlights some key areas of interest. "Energy has always been a big topic," says Westphalen, "but this year it is shifting towards green minerals. Once again, [PAW] is thinking about what is coming next and what has been happening in the past".

Both Gady and Westphalen highlight the busy construction arbitration market as a particular source of discussion, alongside technology and AI, while geopolitical issues are "the topic of many, many arbitrations", Gady adds.

‘Gathering and celebrating and sharing’

As an established part of the landscape, for the third year in a row PAW will [take place under the patronage of](#) the French Ministry of Justice, while the Court of Appeal of Paris will again host an event, eager to foster the [links between the courts](#) and the arbitration community, ties made closer with the election of [the first arbitration lawyer to become president](#) of the Paris Bar.

It is undeniable that PAW’s social side – “gathering and celebrating and sharing” as Gady describes it – is a big part of the appeal, and certain fixtures of the week remain. The opening reception has been upgraded to a 2,000-capacity black-tie gala hosted at *Musée des Arts Forains*, a unique museum dedicated to fairground objects, while the midweek cruise down the Seine and the PAW Games – giving lawyers a chance to show off their sporting prowess – both return for 2026.

PAW’s sustainability and in-house lawyer events will also return, while for a second year the organisation is forging links with universities, and in a city known for its [vibrant disputes boutiques](#), this year’s conference has a participation scheme for firms operating on a smaller scale.

The organisers have also been keen to invest in the arbitral community in other ways. PAW has prided itself on its proactive approach to diversity, basing its [annual keynote address](#) on different variations of that theme, while the board is dominated by female members and reflects a wide range of backgrounds.

This year, with support from the sponsors, organisers have introduced the PAW Fellowship, providing a trip to the conference for members of the arbitral community who would not otherwise be able to attend. “A good opportunity to again achieve these values of diversity and openness, and make arbitration accessible,” says Gady.

Staying on top

With over a month to go, more than 160 events are already scheduled, putting PAW2026 on track to match recent years. “It’s growing so much. Maintaining that success would be a challenge, but the spirit and the DNA is really [that] we keep moving and do not become one of these associations or events that are always the same,” says Gady.

Accordingly, although Hong Kong Arbitration Week might lay claim to being the first of its kind, Westphalen describes PAW as “the mother of arbitration weeks”. The city’s status as one of [arbitration’s capital cities](#) certainly helps. “Paris is a seat of arbitration that works super well because we have the facilities and the clients, we have everything for arbitration,” she continues. “We have the experience that some younger arbitration weeks don’t have. We are at that stage where PAW actually sells itself,” she says, recounting an episode in which the president of an arbitral tribunal suggested moving the date of a hearing so that those involved were free to attend PAW.

The event’s popularity also gives the organisers a perspective on the arbitration world. Despite the current popularity of discussing all things AI and crypto, Gady says work in these areas has been slower to materialise. “I had a crypto case this year for the first time, but generally speaking, I hear people talk about it a lot, but I personally haven’t seen that many cases.”

Mediation [is also growing in popularity](#) and Gady and Westphalen have seen that reflected, in their work and the PAW agenda.

Both board members also highlight the popularity of sanctions and cross-border disputes, while Westphalen has seen a corresponding increase in what she calls “post-conflict resolution”, arising out

of world events, such as the regime change in Syria.

With geopolitical tension seemingly continuing to rise, there should be plenty for arbitration lawyers to discuss during another 10 years of springtime visits to Paris.