

CEOs explore ways to break through bias

Amsterdam, June 15, 2022. Breaking through Bias was the theme of LEAD Network's latest CEO Roundtable, held virtually on 10 May. Top leaders from across the European consumer goods and retail industry came together to explore actions they could take to interrupt, disrupt, and eliminate the workplace bias that affects the career progression and advancement of women.

The importance of LEAD Network's efforts to advance gender equality within the sector was underlined last week when the European Union announced its first-ever quota for women on corporate boards. By mid-2026, listed companies in all 27 EU member countries will be required to have women occupying at least 40% of non-executive board seats, or 33% of executive and non-executive roles combined.

CEOs were invited to complete an anti-bias self-assessment before the LEAD Network event, enabling them to pinpoint practical actions on three different levels: individual, institutional and industry. This paved the way for an honest and dynamic discussion.

Three key takeaways from the session were:

1. Make tackling bias a consistent daily activity. Challenge instances of bias as soon as you witness them.
2. Provide unconscious bias training to every employee, not just managers. Make sure new recruits receive the training as part of onboarding, so they understand from the outset what standards are expected.
3. Seek out ways you can influence those beyond your own company, to help spur industry-wide action on bias. This could include speaking on the topic at external events, getting involved in cross-company sponsorship programmes, or providing leadership to one of LEAD Network's functional chapters.

The CEO Roundtable was chaired by Sean Cohan, Chief Growth Officer and President, International at Nielsen Global Media. *"Change begins within. The recent LEAD Network CEO Roundtable started with a self-assessment of how each of us has driven gender equity. With those insights, we had even more meaningful conversations during the event to drive equity for women in our companies and industry,"* said Sean Cohan. *"Thank you to my fellow leaders for an inspiring discussion and sharing your best practices."*

Forty-one CEOs and regional presidents took part in the event, representing 34 organisations. There was an even split between men and women. One participant commented: "It was a wonderful and inspiring experience. I truly believe LEAD Network can make a difference."

You can find the full summary of the session [here](#).

The next CEO Roundtable will take place in Paris on 13 October 2022.

Background to the CEO Roundtable

The CEO Roundtable was started by Frans Muller, CEO of Ahold Delhaize, in 2017. Since then, it has become a unique forum for senior executives within the European consumer packaged goods and retail industry, bringing together retailers, wholesalers, manufacturers and service providers. The aim is to build a dynamic community of CEOs and regional presidents who are not only committed to making diversity and inclusion a strategic priority at every level of their organisation, but who want to steer the whole industry towards gender equality.

About LEAD Network

LEAD Network is a non-profit and volunteer-led organisation whose mission is to attract, retain and advance women in the consumer products and retail sector in Europe through education, leadership and business development. LEAD Network has a fast-growing membership of more than 14,000 people – both women and men – drawn from 81 countries. Members have the opportunity to build their leadership skills, to widen their circle of contacts, and to be inspired by female role models and male champions in the industry. To date, 65 companies have signed LEAD Network's CEO Pledge on gender diversity.

Media Contact

Mick Broekhof, Co-Founder and secretary of the Executive Committee | mick.broekhof@lead-eu.net | +31 641 899 080