

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **LEAD Network welcomes new CEO**

**Sharon Jeske is retiring after 10 years at the helm of LEAD Network.  
Allyson Zimmermann is the newly appointed CEO.**

**Amsterdam, 15 November 2022.**- After 10 successful years at the helm of LEAD Network, Sharon Jeske, our wonderful Executive Director, is retiring from her role.

Under Sharon's leadership, LEAD Network has become Europe's largest and fastest-growing gender diversity organisation. When she joined, in 2013, there were just a few dozen members; now we have a membership of more than 17,000, of whom 22% are men.

Sharon has steered us through a number of significant milestones on the road to our vision of a gender-equal consumer goods and retail industry. These milestones include the launch of the Gender Diversity Scorecard and CEO Gender Parity Pledge, with the proportion of women in management positions advancing from 25% in 2017 to 35% in 2021; the formation of the CEO Roundtable, where industry leaders share ways to accelerate change; the creation of a thriving network of regional Chapters; and, crucially, the building of a strong network of 60 corporate Partners who are helping us invest in our mission and have an impact.

Sharon has also spearheaded the development of mentoring and education programmes which have benefited the careers of hundreds of our members.



Sharon Jeske

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Sharon for her years of service, her unflagging energy, her authentic, inclusive leadership, and her gift for bringing people together. Veronika Pountcheva, Chair of the LEAD Network Advisory Board, said: ***"Sharon has been a committed and dynamic leader who has demonstrated the power of inclusivity. She will be much missed by everyone who worked with her, but we know she will continue to lend her considerable influence to our mission."***

We are delighted to announce that Sharon's replacement, taking the title of CEO of LEAD Network, is **Allyson Zimmermann**. Allyson is currently the Executive Director of Catalyst's operations in Europe, Middle East & Africa, where she works with leading global organisations to support the development of more inclusive workplaces.

Allyson is well known as an expert on gender equity, including topics such as engaging men, intersectionality, sponsorship and culture change. In 2020, she was named by *Diversity Journal* as one of the Women Worth Watching® and in 2022 was shortlisted for Diversity Champion of the Year in the European Diversity Awards.

Allyson, who is based in Zurich, is a dual national Swiss/American and has lived and worked in numerous countries, including Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Scotland. She holds a BA in Communications and German from the University of Minnesota and is a professional coach.

She said: ***"I'm deeply honoured to be joining LEAD Network. The organisation has had an incredible impact so far and I'm excited about the prospect of building upon the wonderful work that is already in place. I know that together we can continue to serve as the voice of the industry, and achieve our vision of a gender-equal future."***

Allyson will take up her post on 16 January 2023. Sharon will remain on board until at least March to help her transition into the new role.



Allyson Zimmermann

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## 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 accounts for 17,000+ members – both women and men – from 81 countries.

The LEAD Network is run by and for its members, women and men, and we value every individual for their unique perspective. With a primary focus on promoting gender equality the organization strives for the advancement of women of every race, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, educational background, national origin, religion, physical ability and lifestyle.

Its vision is of a fair, diverse and vibrant industry where everyone can thrive. A diverse workforce where both men and women are enabled to contribute their full potential and lead their organisations to the next level of value creation.

**For more information**, please visit <https://www.lead-eu.net/>

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