

# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

JANUARY 2020

## WEPs IN ACTION



PRINCIPLE 2

**Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination**

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## CASE STUDY: RELX

### IMPROVING THE GENDER BALANCE ON BOARDS AND IN LEADERSHIP

#### LESSONS LEARNED

- Investing in collecting reliable and measurable data helps to illuminate the reality of gender inequality in the company. Such insight is key to the next important steps – identifying priorities, setting concrete goals and monitoring progress.
- Building an organizational culture that prioritizes flexibility and work-life balance promotes employees' well-being, improves productivity, and supports long-term retention.
- Supporting women with mentoring, sponsorship and training helps to tackle the structural barriers holding them back from senior positions. It is also key to building a more inclusive pipeline of talent.
- Instilling a culture of inclusion fosters innovation, as it brings in a diverse range of ideas, experiences and expertise, and ultimately helps businesses perform better.

#### CONTEXT

The gender balance in companies listed on the London Stock Exchange has long been a cause for concern, with two United Kingdom government-backed reviews finding significant barriers that prevent women reaching the top of FTSE<sup>1</sup> companies.

The 2011 Davies Review and its 2016 follow-up, the Hampton-Alexander Review, set out the business case: gender-balanced businesses perform better and grow faster. Recommendations for action included a target for women to hold one third of board and leadership positions by 2020.

There has been progress. Between 2011 and 2015, the proportion of women on the board of FTSE 100 firms grew from 12 to 25 per cent.

1. Financial Times Stock Exchange, an index of firms with the highest market value.

By the end of 2019, there were 900 women on FTSE 350 boards. But with only 25 women appointed as Chair and even fewer women as CEOs, progress on women assuming leadership roles generally has been slow.

RELX is a FTSE 15 global provider of information-based analytics and decision tools. Operating in markets including science and medicine, law, and risk, business analytics and events, the company's mission is to help their customers make better decisions, get better results and be more productive.

The company recognizes that gender diversity is good for business and already employs a large number of women, including in tech roles. But with 30,000 employees in over 40 countries, RELX is determined to work even harder to tackle gender disparities.

## ACTIONS

In 2011, RELX Chair Anthony Habgood committed to the target of women comprising one third of the board by 2020. The firm's commitment to gender equality gained further impetus in 2014 when CEO Erik Engstrom signed the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs). In 2020, women make up 36 per cent of the board and 44 per cent of non-executive board. The aim now is to improve gender balance throughout the organization.

### Developing reliable, measurable data

Key to the firm's success has been the development of an inclusion dashboard which monitors progress in real-time and demonstrates gender balance broken down by categories including role, function, and length of service. It allows leaders to monitor trends, for example tracking the demographic of its senior management pool, how it is changing, the point at which they stop progressing, and so on.

**Data from the inclusion board helps RELX understand –and then tackle– the barriers to gender equality. Insight from the dashboard has also now informed a new suite of inclusion goals covering the next five years.**

### Structures that support flexible working

An objective for leaders like Márcia Balisciano, Global Head of Corporate Responsibility, is embedding flexible working in the organization. While there are distinct legal and cultural differences between locations, RELX is committed to making flexibility the norm everywhere, which the company believes will improve retention of women.

Balisciano, who herself works flexibly to fit around her young children, says: "I need that work-life balance. A static 9 a.m.-5 p.m. schedule would not work for me."

"We need to make sure that we are allowing women and men the flexibility to make their work fit their needs. We know that when we give people time and space to do meaningful things, they perform better."

### Mentoring and career development

RELX's philosophy is that an inclusive environment fosters innovation, bringing in a wide range of ideas, experiences and expertise, ultimately helping the business perform better.

This approach allows the company to find "extremely talented women who have the experience we need," says Balisciano. By way of proof, RELX appointed former IBM Senior Vice President, Linda Sandford, to its board in 2012 and in 2019, Kumsal Bayazit was appointed CEO of the firm's scientific and medical business, making her RELX's first female CEO.

**Mentoring and sponsorship are key to tackling the structural barriers holding women back from senior operational roles and to building a pipeline of talent.** The firm is particularly keen to increase the number of women technologists and a global "Women in Tech" programme connects female tech staff with role models. Many of the role models are themselves female technologists.

"It's hard to strive to be something you can't see. You need a path ahead of you," says Balisciano. With this in mind, webinars with senior women technologists are a key part of Women in Tech and cover a range of career-related topics particularly relevant to women in the field.

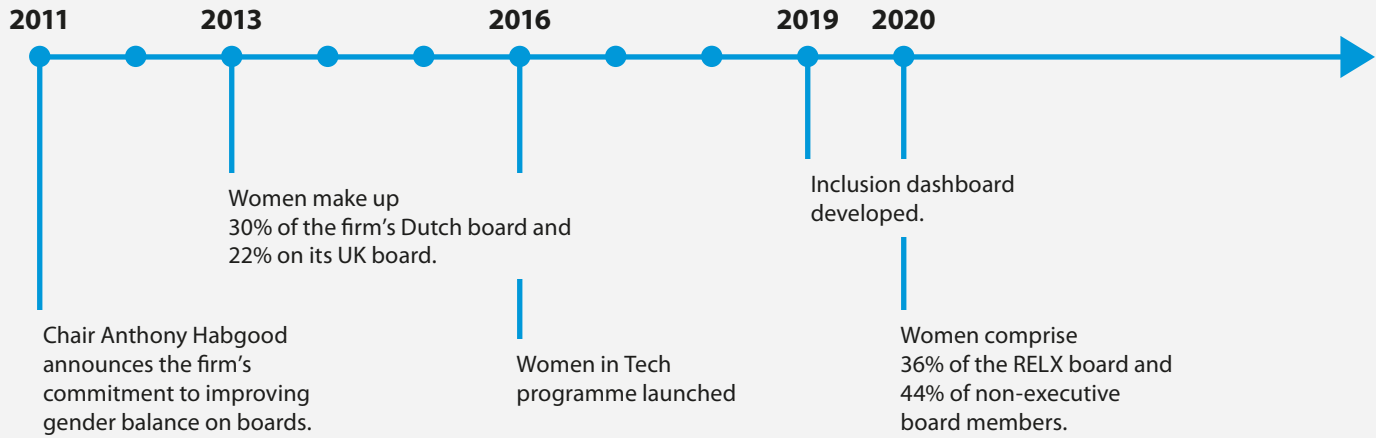
Several women's networks support career progression, exploring issues including team development, gender-balanced leadership and stress management, and offer practical discussion and idea exchange. RELX has 23 women's networks across all its businesses.

One such group, Elsevier Women's Network, which began in 2008 with just five women now has more than 13 active chapters around the world.

Inspiring women and girls to turn an interest in technology into a career is also important. RELX's business analytics arm is one of the founding members of the Tech Talent Charter, an industry group in the UK committed to increasing the number of women in technology, and UK staff regularly work with schools to inspire girls to pursue tech careers.



## TIMELINE



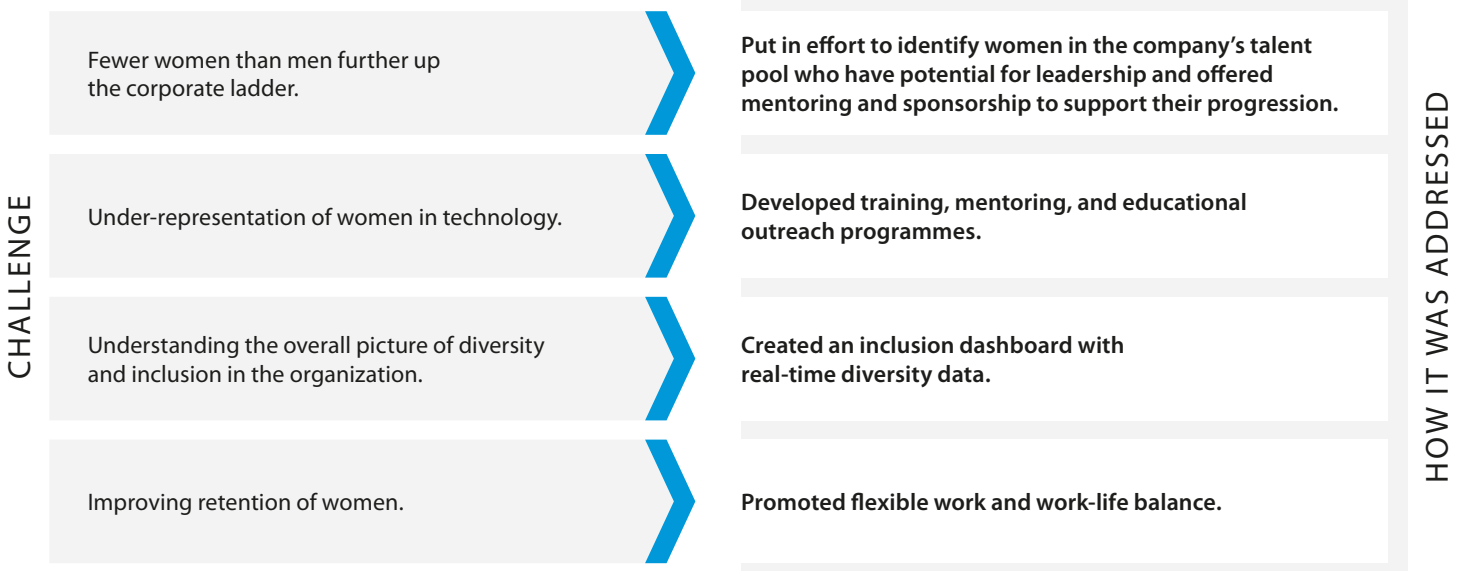
## CHALLENGES

Women's opportunities to serve on boards are affected by their career opportunities to develop senior operational, technical or financial experience.

More effort is needed to find women with the right experience, but Márcia Balisciano shared an instance that demonstrated a catch-22 situation: a hiring leader from a FTSE 100 company was only willing to hire people who already held FTSE 100 roles – immediately limiting the pool of women. Adding to the challenge, senior roles in FTSE firms typically held by women include functions such as HR, for example, rather than operations.

RELX is tackling this by looking for women in the company's talent pool who have the skills and experience to take big leadership roles, and offering mentoring, training and sponsorships which help remove the structural barriers that hold them back.

Under-representation of women in technology is not just a RELX issue – it applies across STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields. But as a major player in the industry with the ability to influence change, RELX's scientific and medical arm has produced a series of gender reports aiming to promote diversity in research. These are freely available and shared across the industry and through the UN as part of RELX's contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals on the RELX SDG Resource Centre.



## RESULTS

In 2013, RELX had already hit its target of improving women's representation on its board, with women making up 30 per cent of the firm's Dutch board and 22 per cent on its UK board. RELX no longer has a two-tiered Board system after becoming a sole UK public limited company, and in 2020, women comprise 36 per cent of the RELX board and 44 per cent of its non-executive board members.

The Women in Tech programme, in particular, has had a significant impact on improving women's representation in senior operational roles, shining a light on women in technology and attracting more women to the profession.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Companies need to understand the reality of gender inequality in their organization, and that starts with reliable data. Analyzing the current situation is key to the next important step – identifying priorities and setting concrete, measurable goals.

It is important to look at women who are already working for you. What barriers are making it harder for them to progress? Why are they leaving? What impact are existing policies in areas like flexible working having on gender inclusion?

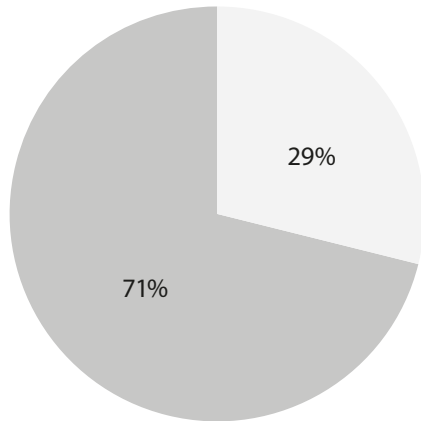
But there also been a mindset shift in the organization and an acceptance that gender equality must happen.

"Ultimately, you can have all the unconscious bias training you want, but it has to be followed with a will to make real changes in the organization," says Balisciano.

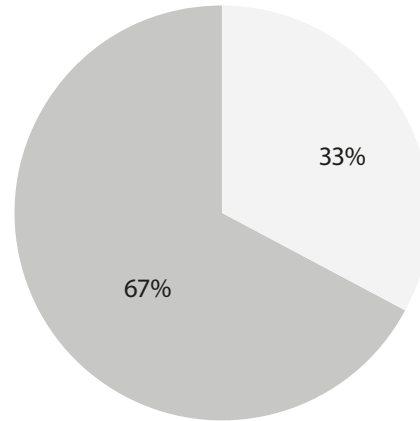
Mentoring is important, especially if it leads to sponsorship. Hearing women's aspirations first-hand and helping open doors for them is a powerful way to address the barriers women face.

Companies must also look at how they acquire talent, particularly for senior roles. The starting point is candidate pools – if these do not reflect the company's diversity ambitions, they must be revisited.

## WOMEN IN SENIOR OPERATIONAL POSITIONS



**2014**










**2020**


Women  
Men

## THE ROLE OF WEPs


The Women's Empowerment Principles have helped guide RELX's approach. It was one of the first companies to use the WEPs benchmarking tool to assess gender equality and subsequently to understand what works. For example, it helped RELX understand what specific actions resulted in closing the gender pay gap.


Márcia Balisciano sums up why signing up to the WEPs has made such a difference for RELX: "We can point to your expectations for us when we have conversations internally on advancing gender equality. As you raise your expectations, it helps raise ours. You are our moral compass."

- Principle 1  Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.
- Principle 2  Treat all women and men fairly at work– respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination.
- Principle 3  Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.
- Principle 4  Promote education, training and professional development for women.
- Principle 5  Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.
- Principle 6  Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.
- Principle 7  Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.

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