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PRESS RELEASE

The Institute of Company Lawyers elects a new Council and President

Els Steen, company lawyer at Ahold Delhaize (CLO Europe & Indonesia) succeeds Marc Beyens, company lawyer at Engie (General Counsel Energy Belux)

Els Steen has been elected as the new president of the Belgian Institute of Company Lawyers by the recently elected Council in which twenty council members are serving a three-year term (2022-2024). Together with the Council, the new president will seek to ensure that the profession of company lawyer gets the visibility, appreciation and respect it deserves.

Els Steen, as the successor to Marc Beyens, will chair the newly-constituted Council of the Institute. This Council reflects the diversity of the profession and the Institute with 20 company lawyers from different sectors, each one with their own unique experience. Their election shows the multiplicity and dynamism of the profession, which requires a high degree of adaptability to be successful and have an impact within a company and society. Their appointment also reflects the ambition to further build bridges with the political and academic worlds, as well as with other (international) professional organisations, which will give more visibility to the company lawyer profession.

Els Steen started her career at the Antwerp Bar. In 2004, she chose to work as a company lawyer at the Delhaize group where she quickly got to grips with the ins and outs of this rapidly changing sector. She also built up deep, all-round legal experience, surrounded by a team of company lawyer colleagues. In 2012, she became Vice President Legal Affairs at Delhaize Belgium and then moved to Ahold Delhaize in 2016 where, since 2021, she has held the position of CLO (Chief Legal Officer) Europe and Indonesia. During Els Steen's previous term of office in the Institute's Council, she was Vice-President of the Executive Committee (ExCo). She is also a member of the Executive Committee of the European Company Lawyers Association (ECLA).

"I would like to thank Marc Beyens and the outgoing council members for their positive drive that has made important achievements possible during their mandate. Over the last three years, I have seen the Institute go through a period of transformation and modernisation. It is my ambition to build upon this evolution together with an enthusiastic Council of experienced CLOs, young potentials, solo company lawyers and legal experts, to ensure that the company lawyer profession gets the visibility, appreciation and respect it deserves. In the next three years, I would like to focus on the role and impact of company lawyers within their companies and to have an increased involvement with universities and our members. What I find particularly important and instructive is being able to line up with committed colleagues in the Council, in the Committees and with the Institute's team. In the time available, we will be connected, efficient and, above all, collaborate with pleasure", says Els Steen.

"The time has come to pass the torch to Els Steen and the new Council. I am confident that Els and her team will continue to be a strong advocate for our profession's interests and our societal role. Finally, I would like to thank all the members, the previous Council and the Institute's team for the unforgettable and rich experience I have had as President", concludes Marc Beyens.

About the new Council of the Institute

The 20 company lawyers elected as members of the Council are: Filip Beyers (Proviron), Véronique Boveroux (ULiège), Christine Declercq (Synegrid), Pierre-François Delneste (Proximus), Nicolas Ista (Novartis), Julie Loffet (Sogepa), Delphine Melkebeke (Puratos), Els Ponnet (BNP Paribas Fortis), Sybille Pringot (Engie), Cristina Rossi (Coca-Cola Services), Donovan Sheppard (Carrier), Els Steen (Ahold Delhaize), Fanny Storms (Mithra Pharmaceuticals), Tatyana Thys (Proximus), Dominique Trimont (ING Belgium), Emma Van Campenhoudt (CEPANI), Herman Van Hecke (KBC Groep), Hugo Vanneuville (ISS Facility Services BeLux), Ellen Vantomme (Positive Thinking Company), and Sarah Wijns (Terumo).

The Institute's new Vice-Presidents are Nicolas Ista and Herman Van Hecke. The Secretaries are Donovan Sheppard and Sarah Wijns. The Treasurer is Hugo Vanneuville. Together with the President, these 5 people form the Executive Committee (ExCo).

About the Institute of Company Lawyers and the company lawyer profession

The Institute of Company Lawyers (Instituut voor bedrijfsjuristen - Institut des juristes d'entreprise, in short IBJ-IJE), was established by the law of 1 March 2000 and is the Belgian professional order of company lawyers with more than 2100 members. The Institute represents and protects the interests of the profession in general and of company lawyers in particular. Company lawyers have a protected title and their legal advice to their employer is confidential. They are subject to their own code of ethics, which guarantees their intellectual independence and their continuing education. The Institute, as a dynamic professional network, aims to connect its members and to be a 'sounding board' in which experiences are exchanged and information is shared about the latest trends and developments. In 2021, the Institute organised, in collaboration with its partners and working groups, about 100 activities.

The role and function of the company lawyer are unique. Company lawyers are employed by the company and as an 'insider' they are familiar with their company's sector, its goods and/or services, its processes and its people and culture. Company lawyers think proactively and contribute to the realisation of their company's mission from a legal point of view. Given they work from within the company, company lawyers can effectively and proactively advise their employer as a business partner and as a guardian of the company's integrity. Company lawyers therefore also have a general interest role and contribute to the rule of law by advising the company to respect the law.

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