ARDIAN COMMITS TO GENDER EQUALITY AND IS EDGE ASSESS CERTIFIED

It’s an important first step: Ardian has been awarded the Economic Dividends for Gender Equality (EDGE) ASSESS level one certification. This certification measures and assesses company commitment to gender equality. It rewards equality measures implemented by Ardian, encouraging it to continue its efforts. Between ambitious program and project continuity: explanations and next steps.

Achieving ever greater gender equality is not merely an objective for Ardian: it is a conviction. "Equality, but also diversity and inclusion, will improve our performance and make us a more innovative and creative company," explains Maria Stasse, Co-Head of Human Resources. This commitment is part of a longstanding global environmental, social, and governance (ESG) policy, whose gender equality pillar has been significantly strengthened.

Ardian’s commitment is reflected in a proactive human resources policy. During the recruitment process, it involves the systematic selection of people of the gender under-represented in the "short lists". It also requires interviews to be conducted by both women and men. In addition, since September 2019, induction seminars for all employees joining the company include workshops on unconscious biases – which can influence thoughts and actions, particularly with regards to diversity and gender equality. All Paris office managers are trained in this key issue and this training is to be rolled-out internationally.

Initiatives have been implemented to support this diversity and gender equality commitment. A collective agreement was signed in France in 2014 and is revised every three years. It is accompanied, in particular, by a study of the wage gap, a commitment to equal pay on hiring and the return of family leave. In 2017, the desire to continue improving working conditions and the work/life balance led to the introduction of a Flexible working policy. Ardian also launched Generation Women, events to promote the finance business among young women. "And we are considering extending this
experience to young women who have not yet obtained their high school diploma," explains Maxime Letissier, Human Resources Manager.

To formalize these longstanding commitments, Ardian signed France Invest’s Gender Equality Charter in March 2020. This charter sets ambitious quantified targets: 40% women among investment professionals by 2035.

**Recognized international certification**

To go even further, and extend the gender equality commitment to all our offices, Ardian chose to launch the EDGE certification process, a label recognized internationally for its rigor and excellence. This process allowed us to assess the current level of gender equality within the company. But also to compare ourselves and draw on other companies’ initiatives. With a constant aim, improving gender equality in the workplace.

The EDGE certification process encompasses several steps. An online survey of all Ardian employees focused on their perception of gender equality within their professional environment. The approach was well received within the teams, with a response rate of 75%. The survey was supplemented by a review of HR policy and an in-depth analysis of gender equality statistics (presence of women, mentoring programs, training, etc.). Finally, the certification process ended with an independent audit to verify the validity of the data provided.

While Ardian’s workforce includes 39% women worldwide and 40% women executives in the Paris offices, several areas for improvement have been identified. These include increasing the number of women among senior managers internationally (20%) and among investment professionals (1.5%). This is a first step.

**Next steps**

EDGE ASSESS certification, the first of three levels, recognizes Ardian’s commitment to gender equality. It is an incentive to formalize diversity and gender equality practices. But also to set new goals and
take further steps. First and foremost, together with the Investor Leadership Network, an international network of investors created in 2018 following Canada’s presidency of the G7, Ardian is working to set quantified targets for international gender equality.

At the same time, Ardian is preparing a more ambitious flexible working policy. Finally, the company is committed to conducting regular salary reviews to reduce potential gender gaps. It hopes these efforts will be rewarded with the second level of certification, EDGE Move.

Beyond gender equality, Ardian is committed to promoting diversity in general within the company. The Millennial Executive Committee, which brings together 15 employees under the age of 35 to develop ideas in conjunction with the teams, is an example of intergenerational diversity. This approach will be pursued and strengthened. "Gender, social and ethnic diversity, and disability are the major lines of our diversity and inclusion policy," concludes Maxime Letissier.