

Women's Initiatives In Their Workplace

Shearman & Sterling's engagement for Professional Equality and Diversity



On March 18, 2019, Shearman & Sterling invited ArbitralWomen's co-founder and Board member **Mirèze Philippe** to lead a discussion with its team on unconscious bias: what it is, how it affects the legal profession, and how to combat it.

Attendees first participated in Implicit Association Tests run by Mirèze, aimed at measuring the strengths of associations between concepts and stereotypes. Illustrations of the most common types of biases were presented and tips were provided on how to overcome them. The team engaged in a conversation on the need for diversity and inclusion, more specifically in the field of international arbitration where the diversity in disputes and parties re-

quires similarly diverse representatives and arbitrators.

The session was held at the firm's Paris office as part of its "Shearman Speaker Series" where thought leaders share ideas on contemporary issues (legal and non-legal) of relevance to the international arbitration group. Given the universality of the topic, members of the firm's global team were invited to participate via videoconference.

This is a topical example of the firm's commitment to the promotion of professional equality and the development of a diversity-centric culture.

A week earlier on March 11, 2019, Shearman & Sterling was awarded the **inaugural Grand Prize for Professional Equality** ("Grand Prix de

l'Egalité Professionnelle") by the Paris Bar in recognition of its innovative and outstanding contribution to the promotion of equality. The firm was distinguished for its initiatives on equal pay, career development opportunities, work-life balance, diversity and inclusion, as well as for other actions in favor of other aspects of equality, which the jury described as "balanced, thoughtful in its policy and well-rounded". The award ceremony was held at the end of the "Assises de l'Egalité" an inaugural one-day programme jointly organised by the Paris Bar and *ELLE Magazine* to discuss existing and emerging best practices related to gender equality in the legal profession.

"This Prize is a great opportunity to



We will continue our current path, supporting and implementing initiatives aimed at achieving equal representation of women and men, in the legal profession and elsewhere.

— YAS BANIFATEMI

both celebrate our achievements and remember that there is a long road ahead," commented **Yas Banifatemi**, Partner and co-Head of the firm's International Arbitration group, who supports and oversees **the women's empowerment group at the Paris office, Shearman#Elles**. "We will continue our current path, supporting and implementing initiatives aimed at achieving equal representation of women and men, in the legal profession and elsewhere. We will also remain heavily engaged in initiatives for equality in the field of education, which is one of our priorities."

Emmanuel Gaillard, Managing Partner of the Paris office and Global Head of Disputes and International Arbitration added: "We are honored and proud to have been awarded the prize for professional equality. This is a testament to our firm's exceptional commitment to promote equality and diversity. We are determined to achieve gender diversity in the workplace and fully support an environment where women and men have equal career development opportunities."

With its own visual identity based on the three first letters of the firm's name ("She"), Shearman#Elles is open to all, women and men, lawyers, business professionals, interns and the administrative staff at the firm. The group holds internal events and discussions monthly. It is also involved in external community and social responsibility initiatives, with a special focus on supporting children's education and their right to equal opportunities.

Shearman#Elles is also working alongside Sandra Bang, **Shearman & Sterling's first Chief Diversity & Talent Strategy Officer**, to take its actions to a next level in the third and fourth quarters of 2019.

"We've taken a hard look at our data and we are applying the findings to create new ways to advance the professional development and career growth opportunities for everyone — and particularly for diverse lawyers and business professionals within the firm," **Sandra Bang** said. "It is not enough to develop new initiatives — changing the culture of law firms will have the biggest impact and that is the broader piece we will work on. Continuing to enhance our inclusive and

collaborative working environment is essential to provide the cultural change needed so that everyone is performing to their highest potential. This will help us attract and retain the best talent and ensure that we continue to provide high quality client service."

Shearman & Sterling's Paris office currently comprises 170 lawyers and business professionals representing a total of more than 30 nationalities and 25 languages. The Paris-based international arbitration practice in-

cludes seven partners, four of whom are women. Shearman & Sterling's international arbitration team comprises approximately 100 lawyers based in nine of the firm's offices. Its recruitment and international traineeship programs, run by Yas Banifatemi, welcome applications from around the world and reflect the multiculturalism, diversity and inclusion that it actively promotes.

Chloé Vialard, Associate, International Arbitration at Shearman & Sterling.

Shearman#Elles' accomplishments over the course of 2018 and 2019 include:

- Fundraising events on International Women's Day: in 2018, 71 kg of clothes and accessories, as well as €6300 were collected and donated to La Mie de Pain and Stop Hunger; in 2019, €7500 were donated to Du Côté des Femmes and Espace Femmes.
- Paris office members welcomed the initiative as great fun as well as an opportunity to engage for impact along with colleagues.
- An internal mentoring programme to accompany and support young women in the firm in their career development. Mid-level associates from all global offices including Paris, also gathered in New York to attend a special career development programme which proposed coaching sessions to educate them about the professional value and benefits of mentorship and sponsorship (when received and when given).
- A one-to-one mentoring programme for 12 teenage girls aged 14-15 (from Saint-Ouen and Drancy). The program includes a presentation by the various members of the office of the various jobs in a law firm. The latest session focused on "is there such a thing as a man's profession?", introducing women professionals from various industries including STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) where women participation has been particularly low.
- A school programme addressed to 11-year old students (from Meudon-la-Forêt) including an insight into the legal profession and the development and improvement of written and oral skills.
- Special events in support of the Girl Rising campaign to raise awareness of the need for girls' education and their empowerment.
- Meetings with inspiring women leaders, such as Chiara Condi, founder of Led by Her, a non-for-profit organization helping domestic abuse victims to rebuild their lives through entrepreneurship, and Loubna Farchakh, the in-house lawyer at Association L'Escale - Solidarité Femmes, which supports and assists women who have been the victims of violence.
- Screenings of movies on the lives of extraordinary women, such as He Named Me Malala; followed by open discussions.