

Q&A with Yoanna Stefanova, Partner NautaDutilh Avocats Luxembourg

“Diversity and inclusion are keys to our success.”

“I believe women have as many opportunities as men to succeed in the legal profession”, says Yoanna Stefanova, a corporate M&A partner with NautaDutilh Avocats Luxembourg.

Ensuring a diverse workforce that mirrors the global world we live in is essential, not only for the well-being of our employees but also to ensure that our firm can continue to provide our clients with high-quality services and innovative solutions.



What has changed for women in law over the years?

This year, Luxembourg celebrates 100 years of women's suffrage, placing the Grand Duchy among the first European countries to grant women the right to vote. In 1923, Marguerite Welter became the first woman admitted to the Luxembourg Bar. Substantial progress has been made since then. Today, 47% of lawyers admitted to the Luxembourg Bar are women. The number of women in leadership positions is increasing steadily in all fields of law. Mindsets have changed, and it is much easier for women to succeed today. There are many opportunities; we just need to seize them. We need to continue to defend past gains and to promote joint efforts towards equality for future generations.

What still needs to happen to make the legal sector even more inclusive?

Until gender parity is achieved in the legal profession, women holding senior positions in law firms must lead by example, act as role models and demonstrate their management abilities. We can proudly say that NautaDutilh Avocats Luxembourg employs an equal number of men and women. The firm's managing partner is a woman and almost half our partners and counsel are female. Our team, like Luxembourg, is multicultural and multilingual, with more than 20 nationalities represented. In addition, NautaDutilh sponsors networking events firm-wide to allow women to share their stories, come up with new ideas and broaden their horizons. Of course, there is room for improvement and not everything is perfect, but our firm is heading in the right direction. Until the goal is reached, we must continue to raise awareness of the importance of being inclusive.

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Do you see any new trends, changes or expectations on the client side?

Clients are facing numerous challenges such as globalisation, innovation and tighter regulation. Their concerns and legal issues are becoming more complex, and they expect more from a law firm than just outstanding legal services. They also want us to reflect society and understand what is going on in the world around us, which requires lawyers to adopt a multidisciplinary approach, working together as a seamless - yet diverse and dynamic - team. A team whose members come from different backgrounds will inevitably come up with more innovative ideas, better understand the client's needs and deliver better results. That's why cultural diversity and inclusiveness are core values of NautaDutilh.

What advice would you offer to women starting out in the profession?

Believe in yourself. Know your strengths and build on them. Be curious and passionate about your work. Don't be afraid to fail. Embrace new challenges and learn from them. Build and maintain your network. Be honest, treat everyone with respect and be a team player. Surround yourself with people you can trust, who challenge and support you. We are lucky to live in the 21st century, in a world where talent is recognised. Don't be shy to let yours shine!