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IWD's debate: Is the accountancy industry a white, male-dominated space? Despite the progress made, a crucial chapter in the history of gender equality remains to be written. Meet the women who are already reshaping the traditionally regarded as 'testosteronic' accountancy world.

By Hilde Blomme, deputy CEO, Federation of European Accountants

Among the 50 professional accountancy institutes that the Federation of European Accountants represents, the majority are still led by men: 84% of their presidents are male and 16% are female.

The percentage of women in a leadership position increases more than twice if we look at their chief executive officers: 38% women act as CEOs or equivalent.

Looking back, the thought of a woman holding a senior level or Board position appeared despicable ... to men.

The composition of the Federation's board is quite different today than it used to be with regard to gender equality. Ten years ago, it consisted of eight men. Currently, three of the twelve board members are women equally participating in decision making as their male counterparts.

These numbers might seem discouragingly low, however, a positive change in gender equality can be observed although collective efforts should continue to sustain further progress.

The accountancy profession at large has also taken steps towards increasing women represented at senior levels.

The actions taken, among others, include offering coaching and mentoring programmes to prepare women for a leadership position, following frameworks to improve gender equality, or setting gender equality ratios and targets.

The numbers reported on partner admissions within firms send a positive message, with up to 20% increase in female partner promotions.

The profession is making improvements in gender equality, however, there is still a long way to go before the meeting rooms will be filled by an equal number of men and women.

