

### Dorothee Arns

*Director General, the European Association of Chemical Distributors (FECC)*

**In this changing world we are living in, do you feel that there are new trends and driving forces in the industry, in particular in the chemicals sector, which open up new opportunities for women? Do you see the potential for women to be more engaged in chemical operations? What are supporting and what are hindering factors?**

“

**We can only embrace the diversity in the markets and anticipate the trends properly if our industry reflects in-house the diversity out there in the world.**

Dorothee Arns

Indeed, business conditions are changing more quickly than ever before. Our societies including our industry and its customers are becoming more and more diverse. We can only embrace the diversity in the markets and anticipate the trends properly if our industry reflects in-house the diversity out there in the world. Additionally, all independent studies have proved the business case for diversity: diverse teams simply perform better. So, in this sense there is a big opportunity for women in the chemical industry.

Nevertheless, our industry still comes across far too often as male-dominated. It has improved over the past decade, but there is still much to do, especially when we think of the low numbers of women in top management positions. This can only be achieved by having female role models and flexible, family-friendly working arrangements for women and men alike so that they can share private and professional obligations in a fair way. Digitalisation will certainly help in this respect.

What proves to be a frequent obstacle for promoting women to leadership roles is that women are more focused on getting the job done at the expense of building up and retaining networks. Additionally, there is a traditional tendency in our industry (and others too, by the way) of promoting men on the basis of their potential, while women are promoted on the basis of their achievements and their performance in previous positions.

This has nothing to do with bad intentions, but with unconscious bias.

**Experts say that, as a result of technological progress the industry in the near future will require more and more specific skills — “a combination of technological know-how, problem-solving, and critical thinking as well as soft skills such as perseverance, collaboration, creativity and empathy”. Do you agree with this? Will it be also the case in the chemicals sector? In this regard, do you think that there could be a greater demand for female employees, and women could get more chances for professional development?**

Yes, I agree with this assessment. Our societal challenges have become so complex – just think of the circular economy, marine litter, or recycling – that one sector alone cannot solve them anymore. Indeed, what we need is innovation in all aspects, from new technologies, new designs to new business processes, new concepts on how to deal with products at their end of the life cycle and with waste. This can only be achieved by open-mindedness, drive for achievement, problem-solving skills, the willingness to learn from others and to collaborate across traditional communities and across all sectors.

These skills are also key for Chemical Leasing and other performance-based concepts: the supplier must be open to such business models, understand how the customers “tick” and which technology they are applying. In this respect, out-of-the-box thinking is also needed, because all this means a paradigm shift.

Is this gender-specific? Personally, I think it is more a question of personality and mentality, less of gender and of age.

**How can performance (service)-oriented business models in general, and Chemical Leasing in particular, benefit from the higher engagement of women in the industry? And vice-versa, how could women potentially benefit from the wider implementation of performance (service)-oriented business models?**

What we are seeing already now is a much stronger trend towards diversification in the chemical industry than ever before, starting with a whole series of highly diverse chemical raw materials up to final applications. This trend will for sure continue.

Consequently, the jobs and their profiles in this industry will also change and further diversify, accelerated by digitalisation, which implies emerging new job profiles for people who have these specific skills, regardless of whether they are men or women.

**In your current position, do you have an opportunity to discuss the gender issue and encourage the self-realisation of women in the chemical industry? Do you see the importance in such activities and why?**

Yes, this topic has always been close to my heart, and the fact that I have the opportunity to actively contribute to it at the interface between the economy and politics is definitely one aspect of my role in Brussels which I enjoy the most. For example, in 2018 I had the pleasure and the honour of representing the chemical industry in a workshop of the European Parliament with senior leaders of the EU Commission, the Parliament, the Council, the Austrian EU-Presidency and the ILO. It was great to exchange views, combine the expertise from different angles and see that the room was absolutely packed with interested women AND men. In my private time, I am mentoring young women from every corner of the globe in their first professional years, and if I can help them it really makes my day.



©pressphoto

## 9.7 CHEMICAL LEASING AND INTERNATIONAL CHEMICAL POLICIES AND INITIATIVES

Chemical Leasing can be used as a modern policy instrument for the sustainable management of chemicals. The business model fits into a wide menu of international and national initiatives and obligations and can help policy- and decision-makers bring fresh momentum to chemical management and sustainable production.

Chemical Leasing has a wide range of applications. It can help companies meet the targets of public sector programmes, as well as respond to mechanisms and initiatives for the responsible management of chemicals. It can be applied to local projects as well as to regional initiatives such as those related to the EU Regulation REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals).

With its potential for reducing costs, waste and worker exposure, Chemical Leasing is fully in line with the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) and is aligned with initiatives such as Resource-Efficiency and Cleaner Production, Green Industry, Sustainable Chemistry and Responsible Care. Chemical Leasing also shares the goals of the global chemical conventions such as the Stockholm, Basel and Rotterdam conventions.

It is also evident that there is a close connection of Chemical Leasing to the Circular Economy approach. Implementing Chemical Leasing strengthens the cooperation of different actors along the supply chain, thus fostering exchange of know-how, life cycle data, and zero-waste thinking. Chemical Leasing encourages the reuse and recycling of chemicals and the installation of closed loop systems.

From a business perspective, Chemical Leasing fully fits in with voluntary sustainability reporting tools and management systems. Chemical Leasing can help companies meet legal requirements relating to, for example, substance control, environmental permits, and occupational health and safety requirements. Applying Chemical Leasing can be a way of limiting the use of harmful chemicals to specific trained and knowledgeable operators who can be monitored closely.

Below, is an overview of binding and non-binding agreements and conventions and their linkages with Chemical Leasing.

### 9.7.1 BINDING INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS AND CONVENTIONS

To ensure a control of chemicals, many initiatives by governments as well as from industry have been launched over the last decades. National governments and the EU have put in place strict regulations for consumer and environmental protection, as well as occupational health. Regulations govern chemical processes as well as the transport and management of chemical substances. At an international level, the industry is also subject to a number of programmes and conventions.

Chemical Leasing builds a business case for ensuring that chemicals are managed throughout their life cycle with a minimum of waste or “zero waste”. The approach mirrors the chemical conventions’ objectives of protecting human health and the environment from toxic chemicals. Chemical Leasing is wider in scope than the conventions, in that it can be applied to hazardous and non-hazardous chemicals and not only to those which are most harmful.

#### Basel Convention

The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal is the most comprehensive global environmental agreement on hazardous and other wastes. It aims at protecting human health and the environment against any adverse effects resulting from the generation, management, transboundary movements and disposal of waste which are hazardous (based on their origin and/or composition) as well as other wastes (e.g., household waste and incinerator ash). (UNEP, 2010). Environmentally Sound Management (ESM) is a central focus of the Convention and is addressed primarily through an integrated life cycle approach.

Waste prevention and environmentally sound management of wastes are an inherent part of the Chemical Leasing concept. In Chemical Leasing business cases, the chemical supplier not only advises on efficient use of chemicals but can also take care of the chemical waste, recycling and/or final treatment.

#### Rotterdam Convention

The Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade is a multilateral agreement that promotes shared responsibilities in the international trade of certain hazardous chemicals and contributes to the environmentally sound use of those chemicals, by facilitating exchange of information about their characteristics (UNEP and FAO, 2008). It covers pesticides and industrial chemicals that have been banned or severely