

FTSE Board Stories



A Company Secretary's Perspective

Rosemary Martin



Vodafone's aspires to become an employer whose track record in attracting and retaining female talent is so strong that by 2025 we are widely considered to be the world's best employer for women.

It is 20 years since Penny Hughes was the first woman to be appointed to Vodafone's Board. Today five of Vodafone's 11 Directors (45%) are women, including Val Gooding who is our Senior Independent Director and chair of our Remuneration Committee, and Margherita Della Valle, our Chief Financial Officer. The number of women on Vodafone's Board has gradually increased: from one in 1998 to two in 2005, to three in 2014, to four in 2017 and now to five in 2018.

At first there was just a Diversity & Inclusion policy that applied to Vodafone's workforce, but in 2013 the Board explicitly adopted its own Diversity Policy. This policy has been updated over the years to broaden the description of diversity and to raise the Board's aspirations from 25% female representation on the Board by 2015 to a minimum of 33% women's representation on the Board and across our senior leadership team (up from 29% of management roles) by 2020.

Vodafone's focus is not only on the diversity of our Board; we also seek to foster an environment where we can all be at our best and to truly belong. We believe that a diverse, inclusive workplace is a strength, and we want to lead by example.

Vodafone offers programmes such as our ground-breaking global maternity policy - 16 weeks of paid maternity leave across all Vodafone markets throughout the world and in the UK a return to work policy that enables women to work four days and be paid for five days for the first six months. In addition, our ReConnect initiative to bring women back into the workforce after a career break, all of which address the challenge of women leaving the world of paid employment or remaining in it but

in more junior roles than their male peers. We combine these initiatives with others designed to make our workplace attractive, such as:

- Gender balance and inclusion induction programmes for all senior leaders across Vodafone
- An unconscious bias programme to raise awareness of unintended behaviours that undermine women's confidence in our commitment to gender equality
- A range of mentoring, coaching, training and peer support programmes for women
- High-profile senior leadership support for activities that promote women's achievements
- Flexible working and home working policies, taking advantage of Vodafone's remote working technologies designed to help women and men to balance family and work commitments

In addition we partner with organisations in our supply chain, across government, in business and with the charity sector to help women advance. We have set ourselves the goal of using our products and services to bring the benefits of connectivity to an additional 50 million women around the world, enhancing the quality of their lives through financial inclusion, health and wellbeing, and building skills and entrepreneurship. The programmes we support include:

- UN Women in which, as a HeforShe Impact champion, Vodafone is making bold commitments to support gender equality
- A partnership between Vodafone Foundation and Girl Effect which aims to connect 7m vulnerable girls in 8 countries to life-changing information via mobile platforms