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Time for visibility of women in the construction chemicals business

Business is open to women

The broad discussion on the diversity of teams in the work environment and on equal opportunities favors the presence of women in men-dominated sectors. An increasing number of women, who make up half of the global population, are taking up STEM education and then are successfully pursuing their career goals, including in the construction chemicals industry. Just a quick look at the current data reveals that in 2021 women represented 59%¹ of all students in the faculty of chemistry and materials engineering at Polish public universities of technology, and according to Eurostat, women hold about 44% of all managerial positions².

The role of women in business, as well as the division into “male” and “female” industries, is the subject of many discussions and research, both in Poland and around the world. Women’s presence is also noted in the scientific and research sector, which is often a prelude to a professional career. According to a report published by Education Foundation PERSPEKTYWY, in 2022 women represented 35% of students at public universities of technology. In turn, the European Commission’s She Figures 2021³ report shows that in fields such as production and construction, women account for merely 30% of PhD students. Such an imbalance in the fields of study affects the perception and functioning of women in the labor market.

Does business have a gender?

Thinking about construction, many people still find it hard to imagine women holding professional roles in this industry. Both the percentage of women studying construction and women working in construction-related professions is quite low. This is clearly evidenced by statistics of the Polish Chamber of Civil Engineers, where the share of women is only 12%. However, this situation is slowly changing and the need to create gender-diverse teams is increasingly coming to the fore. Team diversity, including in terms of gender, gives companies more opportunities to develop and create innovations. McKinsey Report 2020 “Diversity wins”⁴ points out that diversity matters a lot in the context of the company’s financial results. This is why it has a strong business case and simply pays off for businesses.

“Employees play a crucial role in the process of building sustainable development of the company. It is their actions, skills, knowledge, openness to constant change, as well as their awareness of megatrends that are critical to the company’s success. One of the many tasks of the international HR teams in Selena Group is to raise the level of the company’s organisational culture, and to build a sustainable work environment and environmentally responsible employee behaviors. By applying the “sustainable HR” concept, Selena successfully raises its standards of conduct towards employees and customers,” says Andrzej Zygałło, **Chief HR Officer at Selena Group**, an organization that specializes in construction chemicals, but is not a stereotypical company in its sector.

¹ “Women at Universities of Technology” [“Kobiety na politechnikach”], 2022 Report, Education Foundation PERSPEKTYWY; <http://www.dziewczynynapolitechniki.pl/raport>

² Eurostat, Q3 2020

³ She Figures 2021, The path towards gender equality in research and innovation (R&I); <https://op.europa.eu/pl/publication-detail/-/publication/61564e1f-d55e-11eb-895a-01aa75ed71a1>

⁴ Diversity wins, McKinsey report 2020; <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters>

Women represent more than 35% of Selena Group's total workforce. But at Selena FM, the Group's holding company, they account for more than a half – approx. 55% – of all employees. In turn, innovation and research functions in the Group's central laboratory are mostly in the hands of women – they account for 65% of the staff.

“Selena Group is an example of a company that is demonstrating more and more openness to the presence of women in the line of business stereotypically regarded as masculine – in construction chemicals. For the last 30 years, I've been observing changes in the approach to women's pursuing a career and taking senior positions in business,” says **Iwona Koptewicz**, who has built her career and competences at Selena in 12 different job positions, and today serves as **Global Indirect Procurement & Operational Excellence Director**.

“In the construction industry, we are particularly committed to offering an inclusive workplace culture where all individuals develop and use their full potential, and our top leaders advance and empower women in the workplace. Our internal employee award program TITANS for Selena in Poland, in which managers and employees vote in 11 categories, has proven that at our company women are recognised and appreciated, and successfully run many projects. Women – female Titans of 2022 – won in as many as 8 out of 11 categories”, **Andrzej Zygałło, CHRO**, adds.

Women time and women power at Selena

More and more women are successfully pursuing their professional goals at Selena and are successfully progressing to strategic roles. Today, one of the key elements of business development is building the organization's strategy based on ESG indicators. Globally, the subject of sustainable development at Selena is also the responsibility of a woman: **Ewa Kosmala**, building physicist and enthusiast of sustainable construction. It is she, as **Global Sustainability Director**, that leads Selena's transformation towards sustainability and compliance with EU's ESG reporting requirements.

In turn, the organization's transformation and its development in Europe, Latin America and Africa is the role of **Chus Barroso, West Region Director at Selena Group**. She notes that leadership is akin to parenthood. *“As a leader, I must and want to be a model of what we want to achieve, a provider of values, behaviors and skills for our organization,”* Barroso emphasizes.

Diversity and openness are fundamental values of Selena Group and have a major impact on its development, in line with the principle that both female and male employees are the company's biggest capital. This is highlighted by **Patrycja Woszczek, a marketing specialist**, who a year ago decided to start building her professional competences at Selena Group: *“Diversity in teams helps you look at certain challenges from different angles. And this can be seen, for example, during meetings – when a woman joins, she immediately sheds a different light on the topic being discussed. For this reason it's so important to build awareness of the need to set up teams that are diverse not only in terms of the skill set, but also in terms of gender.*

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Additional information:

Selena Group

Selena Group is a global leader and distributor of construction chemicals and one of the four largest global producers of mounting foams for construction. For over 30 years, it has been successfully delivering innovative products that accelerate and facilitate work on construction sites in nearly 100 countries. Its foams, sealants, adhesives, waterproofing products, insulation systems, fastenings, and the complete energy roof system not only help in saving energy, water and time, but also substantially increase the energy efficiency of buildings. Selena Group has been actively working for sustainable construction. It participates in projects of the Polish Green Building Association (PLGBC) and the Polish ESG Association.

With its international experience gained in diverse markets, Selena Group can grow fast as an innovative company. The company has 30 companies in 19 countries and its own Research and Development Center, which coordinates the operations of local laboratories. Selena's manufacturing plants are located in Poland, Spain, Italy, Romania, Turkey, Kazakhstan, China and South Korea. Its high quality and innovative products are appreciated by the Group's partners and customers, who choose the Group's recognizable brands such as: Tytan Professional, Quilosa Professional, COOL-R and Matizol. In 2008, the shares of Selena FM S.A., the Group's holding entity, became admitted to trading on Warsaw Stock Exchange.

