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**New Chair at the helm of the European Services Forum**

The European Services Forum (ESF), representing the interests of the European service sectors in international trade and investment negotiations, has nominated a new chairperson from the beginning of 2022. As we welcome our new Chairperson, it is a good opportunity to assess what has been achieved in the last year in the field of trade in services, and to project what is up on the agenda of exporters and investors from the services sectors.

**Noel Clehane**, BDO Global Head of Regulatory & Public Policy and outgoing chairman, was elected by ESF members in October 2017 and has been a strong supporter of ESF activity ever since. Under his tenure, ESF membership thrived, and we secured even greater visibility with our interlocutors and stakeholders. The services and investment components of EU bilateral trade agreements are now a solid part of the text of the agreements and the schedules of commitments are even stronger, notably through negative listing for instance with Canada, Japan and the United Kingdom. The regulatory disciplines and cooperation, and the performance requirements play a crucial part in the monitoring of domestic legislation that apply to European businesses in all EU FTAs, notably with Korea, Singapore, Vietnam, etc. On the plurilateral front, 2021 saw the conclusion of the negotiations of the Services Domestic Regulation which started in 2017, but for which ESF was already calling for WTO Disciplines as far back as 2000.

**Annette Meijer**, Vice President European Affairs & Deputy Head Brussels Corporate Representation at Deutsche Post DHL Group (DPDHL), has now taken the helm at the organisation with effect January 1st. She commented “I am proud to be asked to lead the European Services Forum during this very productive period for the members who saw an increase of market access and of the legal certainty in their international activities.” She continued, “I am honoured by the support of ESF members to chair the European Services Forum” Annette also remarked “DHL has been a member of ESF since its inception. The representation of all the services sectors interest in trade policy is an important task, and I will ensure that our priorities will continue to be heard by the trade decision makers”. Outgoing chairman Noel Clehane said. “I want to congratulate Annette on her nomination as the first chairwoman in ESF 20 years’ history and wish her every success in pushing forward ESF priorities. It has been a great honour for me to chair this fantastic organisation since 2017 and I am sure that it will go from strength to strength under Annette. I look forward to continuing my involvement on behalf of BDO with the ESF”.

There are many bilateral trade negotiations that are still going one with countries like Australia, Chile, Indonesia and New Zealand, and the talks with India will resume soon. There are still efforts to be made to ratify concluded negotiations, so the EU trade policy will show credibility, notably the agreements with China, Mercosur and Mexico. And the monitoring of all the existing trade agreements remains an important task, to ensure that commitments in services sectors interest are properly implemented.

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