# UN GLOBAL COMPACT COMMUNICATION ON PROGRESS 2021



PLESNER

## Joint Effort

#### Thoughts from the Managing Partner and the CSR Partner

Again this year we submit Plesner's CSR report within the framework of the ten principles of the UN Global Compact. The report reflects our work during the past year, and we set out how we intend to continue implementing our corporate social responsibility in the coming period and the coming years.

The ten principles of UN Global Compact and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted by UN Member States are ambitious and important indicators for a better and, in every way, more sustainable society, globally as well as locally. By joining UN Global Compact, we wish to show our full and continued support of all targets set out in the programme. As we have already done during the more than ten years since we joined the programme, Plesner will continue to work hard to comply with the principles and the Sustainable Development Goals.

In Plesner, we firmly believe that as a leading Danish law firm we are under an obligation to contribute in our day-to-day work to fulfil the human rights principles and to ensure that they are not trampled under foot. Our core business, ie to provide legal advice according to the highest ethical and professional standards, is to a great extent based on constant respect for and enforcement of the fundamental articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They are, among other things, that everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law (article 6), all are equal before the law (article 7), and everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals (article 8).

As an important player among advisers to Danish and international businesses communities and as a publicly well-known firm we believe that we have a special obligation to give back to society something which goes beyond merely the duties and contributions democratically imposed on us like on everybody else, such as taxes and duties and general compliance with laws and rules. Consequently, we continuously aspire to set ambitious goals for ourselves in terms of CSR. Goals which we constantly seek to fulfil and to surpass wherever possible.

Overall, the CSR programme is comprehensive and extends over four main areas distributed on pro bono work for a number of charities, focused support for the education and development of local youth, employee satisfaction and environmental and climate initiatives.

The restrictions on social activities due to COVID-19 have affected the scale of our long-standing local social work in the form of our School Project, and the pandemic and the ensuing restrictions on free movement have affected our employees' possibilities of interacting socially, which is crucial to the well-being of the individual person and for maintaining a successful firm of advisers. As restrictions come to an end, we expect a resumption of the entire School Project. Based on the - after all - useful experiences during the lockdown period in terms of benefits relating to more flexibility in the choice of where to work, we have introduced a new policy which ensures that the individual employee has a better possibility of choosing their workplace.

This year, our efforts with respect to climate and environment may resemble stagnation compared to last year but have to a large degree been characterised by investments in and preparation of technical climate mitigation measures which we expect will entail a reduction of our climate gasses in the coming year. For the same reason we have decided to include our first CO2 accounts with effect from this year. The CO2 accounts show the carbon footprint left by our use of our domicile in Nordhavn in Copenhagen. CO2 accounting is an initiative which we will extend during the coming years to several of the areas where it is possible to assess our climate impact.

This is the first CSR report which will follow our financial year from start date to end date. In addition to constituting the compulsory COP Report to the secretariat of the UN Global Compact, our CSR report is therefore also an integral part of Plesner's annual report and includes the information required by sections 99a, 99b and 99d of the Danish Financial Statements Act.

We hope you will enjoy reading the report.

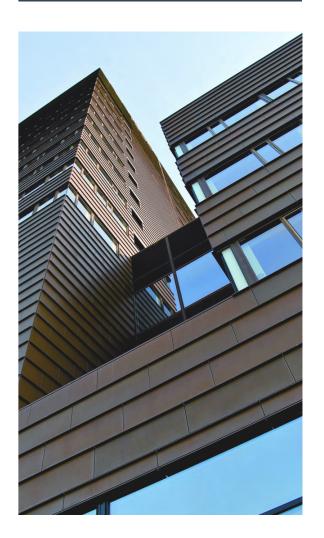
Copenhagen, February 2022

Niklas Korsgaard Christensen Managing Partner

Gitte Holtsø **CSR Partner** 

Plesner Advokatpartnerselskab is one of the leading law firms in Denmark. Our offices are located in Nordhavn in Copenhagen and accommodate a staff more than 450.

Plesner has committed to provide legal advice based on the highest ethical and professional standards and to run our firm in a socially and environmentally responsible way. Plesner has also committed to provide free legal advice to selected charitable organisations and to support the local community in general.



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#### Pro Bono

#### Legal partner to charitable organisations

Plesner has provided strong and well-coordinated pro bono advice to a number of charitable organisations.

It is an important element of Plesner's CSR work to use our core competences as a legal adviser in connection with Plesner's pro bono work. Today, Plesner has partnerships with eleven selected charitable organisations, all focusing on helping vulnerable children and young people as well as those who are critically ill.

Plesner assists the charitable organisations by solving large and small matters, and the charitable organisations increasingly make use of Plesner's competences.

In recent years, Plesner has focused on optimising the internal process in relation to Plesner's pro bono work and on ensuring a flexible and efficient framework for such pro bono advice. This has to a large extent been possible because Plesner for many years has made a great effort to organise the framework of the internal process relating to our provision of advice to charitable organisations.

# Strong long-standing relationships - which continue to be strengthened

Plesner is in regular dialogue with the organisations in order to strengthen our relationships with them and ensure that they will be able to draw on Plesner's advice to the best effect.

Plesner's relationships with most of the eleven charitable organisations have lasted for several years. Due to the long-standing relationships between Plesner and the charitable organisations, there is by now a clear under-

standing between Plesner and the organisations as to the nature of the issues the organisations need solved and of the advice which Plesner can provide to the organisations. This makes Plesner's work with the organisations more efficient and rewarding.

## Charitable organisations in the time of the coronavirus

The COVID-19 pandemic also affected many businesses in 2021 and caused problems and challenges to the charitable organisations in many different areas. Plesner has provided advice on furloughing of organisations' employees with wage compensation, rules regarding requirements that employees and volunteers be vaccinated, interpretation of agreements on fundraising events which have been cancelled or postponed due to COVID-19, the holding of general meetings in spite of bans against mass gatherings, and many other issues which have arisen due to the pandemic.

On this point the charitable organisations' requests for advice from Plesner have been very similar to the requests from Plesner's other clients. This further emphasises that in many respects the advice requested by the charitable organisations is just as complex as that requested by Plesner's other clients. We are proud to have been able to provide advice to the charitable organisations in this extraordinary situation.





### Plesner's school project

At Plesner, we believe in education as the foundation for a good and successful life. Together with one of the local schools in Copenhagen we are engaging with 75 young people and their views on the possibilities provided by education.

Fair and equal access to education is a fundamental human right for everyone, regardless of their background. The Danish State provides an educational framework for everyone but the personal framework which is often also necessary is not always available to all young people.

Most of our employees are highly educated and they are networking, professionally and privately, with other highly educated persons. We see the positive effect of this every day.

However, some young people grow up in communities where education is not valued or prioritised sufficiently. We do our best to make a difference to these young people. It is therefore an important part of our CSR programme to set up long-term partnerships with selected schools where our influence may impact the young people's choice of education positively. That is the background for Plesner's School Project. And we are very proud of it.

The idea of the School Project is to motivate young people to focus more on their schooling and on continuing their education after having completed lower-secondary school and upper-secondary school. The School Project can provide them with a different view of their job opportunities. Normally, the largest motivation from the School Project is the contact between role models and the young people and annual visits to various large companies and institutions where they can get a first impression of the many job opportunities also available to them.

#### Nørrebro Park Skole

For more than ten years, Plesner has followed lower-secondary school classes at Nørre-bro Park Skole in Copenhagen for the purpose of motivating the pupils to continue in the education system when they leave lower-secondary school. In addition, the project aims at inspiring young people to take an active part in society and consider future career opportunities. The School Project consists of Plesner role models and volunteers who wish to make a difference to the young people in the Nørrebro district.

The School Project involves monthly visits by the Plesner role models where the role models and the pupils discuss topics of current interest, for instance free speech or the sharing of photos without permission, as well as visits by role models from various companies. Once every six months the pupils are invited to visit one of the companies which are School Project partners.

In 2019, the pupils in two 9th grades, whom Plesner had followed since they started in the 7th grade, finished school. In spite of challenges and some turnover of pupils, action plans had been prepared to ensure that all pupils had the necessary support to continue in the education system.

Plesner invited all pupils for a reunion in the autumn of 2019. At the event we had an opportunity to discuss the pupils' transition from the 9th grade. All pupils were well under way with continuation school (Danish: efterskole), 10th grade, upper-secondary education or other education. That is surely a success story.



## Flexibility to choose where to work increases our wellbeing and productivity

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided Plesner with plenty of learning. We want to take the positive experiences we have gained during the past year and use them actively to develop our culture in order to be able to continue to attract and retain sought-after talents and create value for our clients. Consequently, we have introduced a new policy during the past reporting period which illustrates what Plesner is doing to ensure a flexible and attractive workplace.

#### Participation in planning the working week

Plesner's new policy means that in future we will also be able to work from home some of the time. At Plesner, we have chosen a model for flexibility allowing each employee and manager to discuss and align expectations for a mutually beneficial framework as to where work is performed. Consequently, we offer our employees to participate in planning their working week with days working from Plesner's offices, at home or somewhere else.

#### Digital communication for efficient collaboration across teams

When we also work from home some of the time in future, we will still be using Microsoft Teams etc to be able to collaborate efficiently when working remotely. In the autumn of 2021, each team discussed principles for efficient meetings to ensure that everybody will be heard and included when we collaborate from different locations.

#### Modern office furniture and IT tools for the home office

We believe that it is important for our employees to have well-appointed home offices. Plesner makes modern office furniture and

IT tools available to enable our employees to furnish their home offices in a modern and stylish manner.

#### Digital knowledge sharing and webinars

We are looking forward to meeting our clients in person again but will continue to share knowledge digitally through webinars. Large meetings such as townhalls where we gather all Plesner employees will still be held digitally in order to enable everybody to participate - both when working from home and when working from their offices at Plesner.

#### Learning along the way

Following the launch of this policy, all managers at Plesner have made arrangements with their closest employees as to how they plan their working weeks and benefit from the possibility of working from home. At the same time, all our teams have discussed what works well and what should be adjusted in a new everyday life where we will also in future be collaborating with colleagues who are working from different locations. Everything is new, and we will continue to learn and to make adjustments along the way.

We are excited about the changes we are facing and we are looking forward to continuing to develop Plesner's culture.

## What do you get from flexibility in everyday life?



preciate being able to work from home. Flexibility makes everyday life easier.

Lynge Daugaard Jensen Attorney-at-Law



easy to take a break and go for a run at some point during the

Nicolai Kjærgaard Sørensen **Assistant Attorney** 



As the father of a little boy I ap- When I work from home it is When I work from home I take the time to go out for a breath of fresh air in the garden - it enables me to get back to my work with new energy and a clear head.

Elisabeth Milman HR Consultant



If I need to concentrate on a large data analysis it can be beneficial to do so at home where it may be easier to find somewhere quiet.

Pia Valentin Erichsen **CFO** 



I appreciate the opportunity to work from home when I have to really concentrate on work. I have also noticed that flexibility gives me more energy during the day.

Anna S. Ravn **Assistant Attorney** 



When I work long hours I have more energy when I have been able to work from home some of the time.

Jimmy Skjold Hansen Partner

#### Radical change of career model is to set a new agenda for collaboration and management

We invest in our employees' growth and support them in gaining the right experience and the relevant qualifications which will create a solid basis for the career they envisage.

As reported in the CSR report for 2020, we have introduced radical changes to our career model which are to make the career paths for lawyers clear and ensure continued development of lawyers' professional and personal competencies. Implementation of the career model continued in 2021, and during the reporting period we have introduced three new tracks tailored to equip Managers, Directors and Senior Counsels for more responsibility internally in the organisation in the form of management and project management and externally in the form of client development.

In the winter of 2021, we launched Plesner's new Client Development Program introducing a group of Senior Counsels and Directors to tools which are to strengthen their advisory competencies and equip them to develop trusting and long-term client relationships.

"It has been a couple of inspiring and instructive days packed with tools and knowledge which I can use every day. I feel that I am well equipped to provide client-focused, value-creating advice of the highest standard. And it has also been a perfect opportunity to strengthen social ties to colleagues working in other teams", says Mathias Kjærsgaard Larsen, who was a Director at the time but has now moved on and has become a Partner.

#### How can the legal profession retain female talent and improve gender diversity at the top?

One of our major challenges is to get more women among the partners. It is a regrettable fact that the picture is the same in other large Danish and international law firms, and equal gender distribution in top management also seems to continue to pose a challenge to trade and industry. It is still important for Plesner to pave the way for more female partners. We have therefore, like many other major law firms, decided to sponsor a business PhD under the auspices of the Danish Bar and Law Society and Copenhagen Business School. The research is to clarify the reasons for the low share of female partners in the legal profession and identify how to retain female talent in the profession and get more women at the top of law firms.

The research project is carried out as an anthropological field study in a number of law firms, and anthropologist Pernille Slots Lysgaard continuously conducts participant observation and interviews managers and employees at all levels. Pernille Slots Lysgaard will be looking at the complexities, barriers and dilemmas existing when it comes to achieve greater gender diversity in the legal profession and specifically in top management.

One of the objects of the project is to provide businesses and politicians with tools to set up a labour market that is more attractive to female leaders. We look forward to following the project and learning from it.





#### **Environment and climate**

#### Our environment and climate initiatives

Plesner's carbon footprint may be low compared to those of other businesses, but we do leave one. We would like to contribute to lowering climate gasses and in future we will therefore increase our focus on and documentation of measures reducing the quantity of CO2 which we emit.

## Energy optimisation and reduction of the climate impact

For many years we have worked continuously on reducing our climate impact. We have in particular focused on replacing our light sources, which means that today we are almost exclusively using LED-based light sources in our domicile. The light is monitored by a clock and continuously adjusted in accordance with the amount of daylight.

During this reporting period we have switched our focus from lighting to heating and ventilation. In 2021 a project was commenced and implemented, and we have invested in and installed a so-called CTS system to replace the previous heating and ventilation control system in the building. When the implementation project is completed in the 1st quarter of 2022 we expect annual savings of up to 15% in our energy consumption.

In future, we wish to follow and document our work involved in reducing the climate impact of our activities more systematically. Accordingly, we have decided to include our first CO2 accounts in this year's CSR report. The accounts are based on the CHG protocol which divides CO2 emissions into three groups referred to as Scopes. Scope I includes direct emissions, while Scope II covers indirect emissions. We have not found emissions within Scope I of an extent which makes it relevant to include such emissions in the CO2 accounts, while we consume both

electricity and district heating within Scope II. This year's report therefore includes the emissions from Scope II.

The sources of the calculations are invoices from our energy suppliers. The CO2 emission factors used to calculate the actual CO2 impact were collected from the Danish Energy Agency's centre for energy efficiency. The number of employees was collected from the annual accounts.

#### CO2 accounts

Scope 2	2019	2020	2021
Electricity	9,7	8,3	8,6
District heating	32,2	30,2	35,3
In total	41,9	38,5	43,9
Per employee	0,1	0,1	0,1

All figures in tons CO2 equivalents (CO2e)

This first year we focused on Scope II when calculating our emissions. Accordingly, the emissions within Scope III have not been calculated and included for the time being. Scope III includes other indirect emissions that occur in a company's value chain. This may include travelling, waste disposal, etc. Our aim is, concurrently with our reduction of our emissions in Scope II, to calculate and present our emissions within Scope III and at the same time work to reduce such emissions.

#### **Energy labelling**

Every 10th year, and most recently in 2020, the Danish Energy Agency prepares an energy performance report for Plesner's domicile in Nordhavn. Energy labelling is compulsory and is a form of climate information which renders the building's energy consumption visible. At the same time, the energy labelling report gives an idea as to which energy improvements may be beneficial to our energy consumption and reduce our climate impact.

The energy labelling has made it possible for us to focus our efforts during the last ten years on the most efficient measures and has been a strong reason for our energy label F having been replaced by a B today.

The energy labelling of our domicile in the Copper Tower at Amerika Plads 37 is up for renewal in 2030. During the time leading up to the deadline we will continue our work on energy optimisation of the building. The next step on the labelling scale is an A-2010 label, which will be a major challenge due to the age of the building and the current technological possibilities of optimisation.

#### Waste management and recycling

One of the initiatives aimed at reducing the firm's climate impact is our waste separation project in the canteen. Our waste is now separated into biowaste, residual waste, metal, cardboard, paper, glass, plastic and electronics. Biowaste from the canteen is kneaded at a receiving facility, which means that the bags containing biowaste are wrung up, made into pulp and digested. The residual product from this digestion is manure which can be spread directly on the fields. In that way, the separation of waste contributes to non-depletion of soil and contributes to a higher degree of recycling of our waste.

We continuously work to reduce the amount of paper used through process optimisation, increased use of environmentally friendly paper and office supplies, and by environmentally correct removal of waste. This also includes passing on the larger part of the paper and cardboard we use for recycling.

In the coming period, a project will be commenced which will focus on reducing the amount of office waste. An element in this project is a reduction of the number of individual waste paper baskets. Normally, each room has one or two. Each basket includes a plastic bag. The plastic bag is replaced by the cleaning staff if it contains waste. We expect this project to reduce the consumption of small plastic bags considerably.

#### Canteen operations and ecology

In 2021, Plesner's canteen was awarded the bronze ecolabel for ecology. We would, as a minimum, have liked to have been awarded a silver ecolabel which would indicate that the canteen at Plesner is using at least 60% organic raw materials and similar products. We believe that it would indicate in a reasonable manner that climate and environment is also a special focus area for Plesner when it comes to food products. However, due to the current situation in the market for organic products, we have not been able to get further than the bronze ecolabel, as we also take into account the price in CO2 when it is only possible to get organic apples from France. In that situation we would take a holistic approach and buy Danish apples which are delicious but unfortunately not always organic.



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## Plesner's implementation of the un global compact 2021

Plesner joined the UN Global Compact in 2012. By doing so, we have committed to the UN Global Compact's ten universally accepted principles with respect to human rights, employee rights, environment & climate and anti-corruption & bribery. Plesner's CSR policy, CSR programme and CSR initiatives in 2021 reflect all ten principles of the UN Global Compact, which are put into practice in connection with specific initiatives across the firm.

#### Human rights

Our employees' well-being and job satisfaction are important focus areas in our work. As part of this long-standing and continuous project we have introduced new Client Development and Project Management training programmes during the past reporting period. Based on experiences from the widespread remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have improved the possibilities of flexible working by offering to supply all employees with desks, chairs and desk lamps for a well-functioning home office. These initiatives are further supported by a policy on flexible working.

It is a key element of our CSR programme to use our legal core competences for charitable work in our local community. We continuously advise a number of charitable organisations by offering free legal advice to provide them with an opportunity to obtain qualitative assistance - just like everyone else. Compared with our last reporting period, the number of charitable organisations with whom we collaborate and support by providing pro bono work has been increased from eight to 11.

Another important element of Plesner's CSR work is the School Project, which also reflects Plesner's social responsibility. The purpose of the School Project is to motivate pupils in selected schools to continue in the educa-

tion system after completing lower-secondary school and to inspire such pupils to take an active part in society and consider their future career opportunities. The fundamental idea of the School Project is the meeting between Plesner's employees and the young persons in the school classes we have chosen to involve. Due to the long lock-down period, activities have been very few during the past reporting period. Instead, the time earmarked for the project has been used to prepare and improve the future project which started up in January 2022. Moreover, from summer 2022 the nature of the project also changes to the effect that instead of following three 7th grades we will be following one. On the other hand, we expect to be able to engage even more with each pupil.

As mentioned in the introduction to this report, human rights are a key element of our profession as lawyers, and we expose ourselves to a significant reputational risk if we do not prove to be able to actively support and measure up to the UN's human rights and the principles of the UN Global Compact which we have chosen to follow in our CSR reporting.

#### **Employee rights**

We are convinced that employees who have to deliver work at a high level need to flourish in the workplace and must be able to engage on a professional and social level with their leaders, colleagues and clients in solving tasks without being exposed to discriminatory behaviour. We are also convinced that in order to support the individual employee's well-being and satisfaction with the work performed by the individual employee, we must focus continuously on our employees' development of talent, qualifications and career.

In order to support development opportunities we have launched a number of initiatives during the current period, for instance a Client Development course which is offered to Senior Counsels and Directors, and a Project Management course which is aimed at our Managers. Moreover, work for the purpose of strengthening Plesner's existing feedback culture has been introduced in the partner group.

It must be possible to attain and pursue a goal of well-being, work satisfaction and development at all times during a career and regardless of the individual's position in the organisation or personal characteristics. As is also true for the legal profession as a whole, Plesner has been focusing on the distorted gender distribution for several years. Today, women constitute more than half of those who start working as assistant attorneys, but the partner group as a whole is characterised by a preponderance of men. During this reporting period the gender distribution in the partner group is the same as during the past period, ie 18% women and 82% men. The same bias applies at the highest level of management. During the past period, one member of the Plesner's board of directors was a woman. During the current period, the board of directors has not included a woman.

Plesner is committed to continue efforts to increase the ratio of women on the firm's board of directors to 20% before the end of 2023 and to increase the ratio of women in

the partner group. For this purpose, Plesner has joined a number of other law firms in sponsoring a business PhD under the auspices of the Danish Bar and Law Association and Copenhagen Business School. The results of the research are to provide greater clarity as to the reasons for the low ratio of female partners and to identify how we will be better at retaining female talents in the profession.

Diversity and inclusion as well as equal opportunities for our employees to use their competences across genders are also important primary goals which we believe have been achieved during the reporting period.

Physical as well as mental safety in the work-place and in the performance of the work which our employees are asked to do are absolutely essential for building the confidence and the collaboration which ensure our and our employees' continued development as human beings and as a firm. If we are not capable of creating and maintaining such safety, we run a serious risk of not being able to continue recruiting talents who are prepared to deliver at the high level which is necessary for a firm such as ours. This means that our ability to create safety will also be a basic condition for operating our business.

#### **Environment and climate**

Since 2015, we have worked actively to reduce Plesner's energy consumption and so far it has been reduced by more than 30%. In the continued work to reduce our carbon footprint we have during the present period invested in a new system to control heating and ventilation, which is expected to reduce our energy consumption by up to 15% more. In order to be able to provide better documentation of our work to reduce the CO2 impact in future, CO2 accounts have been added to the CSR report from this year.

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## READ MORE ABOUT PLESNER'S PRIVACY POLICY

In addition to our focus on energy optimisation and reduction of the climate impact, we will during the coming period continue our work aimed at reducing our volume of waste and encourage recirculation whenever possible.

We have already come far in reducing our climate impact on our common environment. However, we expect this work to continue for many years. In that connection we are facing a risk that it may become difficult to justify additional efforts when the benefits of behavioural changes will be comparatively small and - in the short term - relatively costly. In addition to continuing to work on reducing the climate impact from our activities, we are therefore also facing a motivational challenge which has to be addressed during the coming years.

#### **Anti-corruption**

Plesner implemented an anti-corruption policy several years ago, and it is updated regularly. This policy is to contribute to the prevention of corruption, bribery and other unethical behaviour. The anti-corruption policy is pursued through our case registration procedures and by continuous internal communication. In 2021, Plesner continued the development of screening measures to prevent corruption, bribery and other unethical behaviour. An effort we intend to continue during the coming period.

As appears from our anti-bribery policy, Plesner does not tolerate any use of unlawful means to promote cases and situations for personal gain by evading the law and contrary to proper and ethically acceptable behaviour. Consequently, this absolute zero-tolerance policy also constitutes a reputational risk if we or one of our close partners should turn out to be unable to comply with this standard.

#### Data ethics

Being a law firm, correct and confidential handling of information has always been a cornerstone of our work. We are bound by the code of conduct of the Danish Bar and Law Society, and we are subject to the code of conduct administered by the Association of Danish Law Firms.

The data we handle include information about our clients and their employees, the cases our clients entrust us with and relevant information about the parties involved in one way or another in such cases. We also handle data about our employees, suppliers and other partners, who all have legitimate expectations that the data they have surrendered to Plesner will be handled in confidence and in a data-ethically acceptable manner.

Based on our affiliation to the code of conduct administered by the Association of Danish Law Firms and our duty to comply with the code of conduct of the Danish Bar and Law Society, it is our assessment that we do not have a current need for a separate data ethics policy. As a law firm we are obliged by a codified duty of confidentiality and obliged to always protect the interests of stakeholders as well as society, and therefore the work on data ethics and the assessment as to how data should be handled correctly in the individual situation is an integral part of our everyday life.

By virtue of the requirement that the lawyer must always act in accordance with the code of conduct, ethical data handling considerations also form an integral part of both the education at university and the training as an assistant attorney before qualifying as an attorney-at-law. In addition to general training and education, we have formulated policies with respect to data protection in particular which explain how we handle personal data.

