



# ACCOUNTANCY EUROPE.

## Marking 30 years – a new beginning on solid foundations

That's the thinking behind the Federation of European Accountants (FEE), as it reached its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 7 December 2016. It's a time for looking back at what FEE, now Accountancy Europe, has achieved – but, more importantly, a staging post for setting out the future, with a new name, a new look, a new website, but most of all, a new philosophy: 'Because people count'.

"It's about more than just a change of the logo - although that is changing, too!" laughs Olivier Boutellis-Taft, the chief executive. "I think there was a time," he says, looking back, "where we were accountants, talking to other accountants. Now, we speak with everyone. A source of advice for politicians, a sort of think-tank with our events and publications, an advocate for our members, the voice of the accountancy profession, and – most importantly – working in the public interest for the benefit of society as a whole. "We have been increasingly engaging with other stakeholders, such as NGOs, and find society has also started talking to us."

At this celebration with more than 500 stakeholders in December 2016, the new look was formally unveiled. It consists of a new name, 'Accountancy Europe', and a new logo – a simplified letter 'A', crowned with a point. That 'A' obviously refers to the accountants, auditors and advisors it represents. It goes a long way to fulfilling Olivier Boutellis-Taft's stated aim for the rebranding: "Simpler, broader, more outward-looking." Accountancy Europe is transparent, direct and 'to the point'.

The neat symbolism of the logo does not stop there. The 'A', can – depending on the observer – signify an umbrella (indicating the role of Accountancy Europe in uniting its members), an arrow and target (suggesting accuracy and efficiency), and loudhailer (giving a prominent 'voice' to the organisation in Europe and beyond). But perhaps most importantly, it is the simple outline of the human figure, returning us to the overarching theme of the relaunch, of representing people. 'Because people count', as professional accountants make numbers work for people – as clients, stakeholders, and members of society.

"We are facing an era of great challenges, but also great opportunities. Machines and automation can do a lot of the work we used to do. Naturally, that makes a lot of people nervous. But people are going to count even more – computers can do processing, but people will have to do the interpreting. Machines still struggle identifying what the real problem is and cannot (yet) give fully thought-through tailored advice. More importantly: machines don't care about ethics and cannot sustain morale values, trust or exercise judgement".

“Blockchain and smart contract may help increasing certainty and reliability, but cannot create trust. Trust remains the foundation of trade and any kind of relationship; professional accountants are the providers of trust.”

And trust is an ever scarcer commodity in the modern marketplace – not least in the world of accountancy and auditing, whose image of stability and solidity has been scratched in heavy public scrutiny in recent years.

It's a different world from that of 1986, when FEE was founded. Then, the European Union contained just 10 countries and FEE's member organisations covered 21 countries. Now, Accountancy Europe's membership boasts just shy of 1 million professionals, united in 50 professional organisations from 37 countries including all 28 EU member states.

With the current economic and political state of Europe, the next 30 years for Accountancy Europe look exciting, if challenging, at times. Building on solid foundations, Accountancy Europe will keep bringing people together to inform the public policy debate in Europe and beyond.

