

NEON Elects New Board

Brussels, 11 March 2019

Meeting in Rome, the members of National Energy Ombudsmen Network (NEON) have elected Mr Janusz Gwiazdowski (Coordinator for negotiations to the President of the Energy Regulatory Office, Poland) as the new President of NEON. Mr Roberto Malaman (ARERA, Italy) will serve as vice-president and Ms Sabine Keirse (CWaPE, Belgium) as the association's treasurer. The association's governing body is elected until the end of 2020.

Taking on the role, Mr Gwiazdowski said: *"It is an enormous pleasure for me to take on the Presidency of NEON and a great honour to succeed Mr Lewis Shand Smith, who was one of the founding members of the association and a first-class spokesperson for NEON and its members. I am very much looking forward to continuing his work to make NEON the reference organisation for statutory out-of-court dispute resolution in the energy sector in Europe and beyond."*

The NEON network was created in 2013 out of the cooperation of the energy consumer dispute-resolution bodies of France, Belgium, the UK and Catalonia and has since extended to Italy, Ireland, Poland and one non-EU country (Georgia). NEON members act as appeals bodies ("mediators") that help consumers solve outstanding disputes with their energy service providers. They are mandated by public authorities and are independent both from companies and from consumers over which they have jurisdiction. In 2018, NEON members collectively resolved 90 000 complaints.

Mr Janusz Gwiazdowski is the Coordinator for negotiations to the President of the Energy Regulatory Office (Coordinator). The office of the Coordinator was set up in 2017 and is certified under Directive 2011/13/EU. The Coordinator is an independent mediation service with has jurisdiction over approximately 14 million households. He is accountable towards the Polish President of the Energy Regulatory Office and the President of the Competition and Consumer Protection Office. He was elected for President of new Board.

Mr Roberto Malaman is the Director for Consumer Advocacy at ARERA (*Autorità di Regolazione per Energia Reti e Ambiente*), the Italian Regulatory Authority for Energy, Networks and Environment. ARERA was empowered by law to establish the Italian dispute-resolution service for electricity, gas, and water; the “Servizio Conciliazione” is active since 2012, and managed more than 11.000 disputes in the year 2018.

Ms Sabine Keirse is Director for Consumers and Legal Services at CWaPE (*Commission wallonne pour l’Energie*), the energy regulator of Wallonia (South of Belgium). She leads the regional mediation service for energy (Service régional de médiation pour l’énergie), which was created in 2008 through a governmental decree to treat questions and complaints related to the regional competences in the area of energy. Ms Keirse is appointed by the regional government of Wallonia according to a legally defined procedure and conditions. The CWaPE is accountable to the court of audit and to the regional parliament.

NEON is the European network of independent, not-for-profit consumer dispute-resolution services and ombudsmen active in the energy sector. Our members have the public mandate to provide an easily-accessible and free-of-charge system to solve disputes between consumers and companies. We work to guarantee the rights of all consumers, including the most vulnerable ones, through the promotion of public-interest, independent complaint-resolution bodies.

For more information, please contact:

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