

Out of the starting blocks

# Future leaders

They're young – around 30 years old - they're managers, and they work for large international companies spread across Europe. At this age, they're already very aware of the new climate of CSR. What have been their experiences? What dilemmas have they faced? What lessons have they learned? And will they be Europe's CEOs ten years from now?

By Jan Bom Photography by Chris de Bode

**Name:** Virginie Delwart (1978)

**Job:** Project Manager CSR, Johnson & Johnson

**City:** Brussels, Belgium

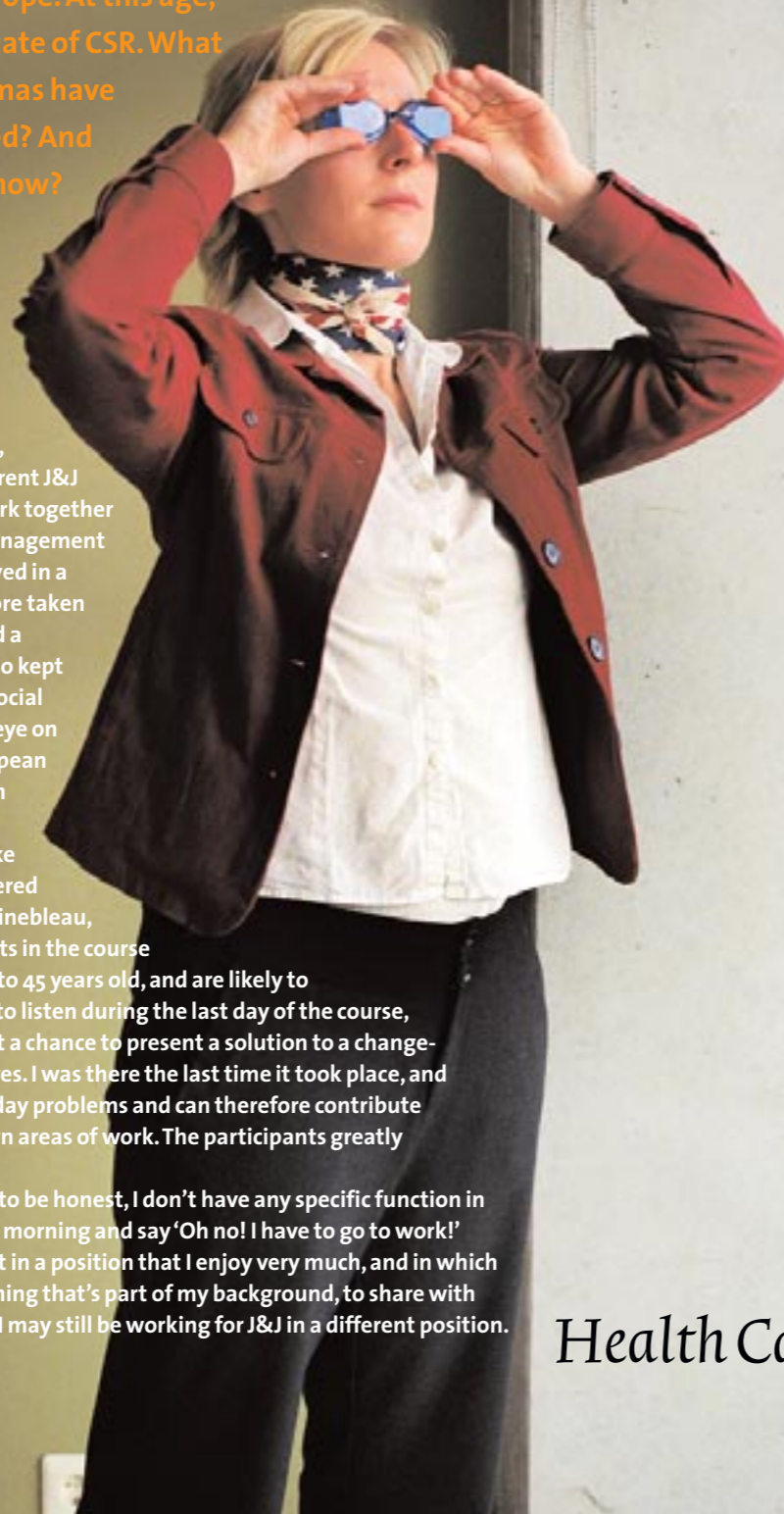
**Favourite sport:** Swimming

**CSR activities now:** "The CSR department is a small team, which actually works as a catalyst in relation to the different J&J entities in Europe. The director, a student intern and I work together in a decentralised way. We work closely with our line-management colleagues throughout Europe, and are constantly involved in a whole lot of different things. Much of my work is therefore taken up with communication, including the annual report and a number of other reputation-oriented documents. I'm also kept busy with managing the department's budget and the social investing we do with our partners. Finally, I keep a close eye on a partnership that Johnson & Johnson has with the European Child Safety Alliance (ECSA), an initiative of the European Consumer Safety Association in Amsterdam.

To give you an example of J&J's long-term CSR vision, take our European Health Leadership Programme. We've entered into a partnership with INSEAD Business School in Fontainebleau, where we offer a course for future executives. Participants in the course already have a good deal of experience, usually aged 40 to 45 years old, and are likely to become the future directors of the Health Sector. We go to listen during the last day of the course, when a marketplace is organised. All the participants get a chance to present a solution to a change-management problem that they've developed themselves. I was there the last time it took place, and was extremely impressed. You're confronted with everyday problems and can therefore contribute something to the solutions that have to do with your own areas of work. The participants greatly appreciate our external perspectives."

**Where do you want to be in 10 years?** "In 10 years?! Well, to be honest, I don't have any specific function in mind, but the only thing I don't want is to wake up every morning and say 'Oh no! I have to go to work!' I would like to still be working in a dynamic environment in a position that I enjoy very much, and in which I can learn new things. I may go back to teaching, something that's part of my background, to share with younger people what I've learnt in the private sector. Or I may still be working for J&J in a different position. I'll let you know!"

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Health Care

## Chemicals

**Name:** Julian Suurmeijer (1975)

**Job:** Marketing Co-ordinator, DSM Anti-Infectives

**City:** Delft, Netherlands

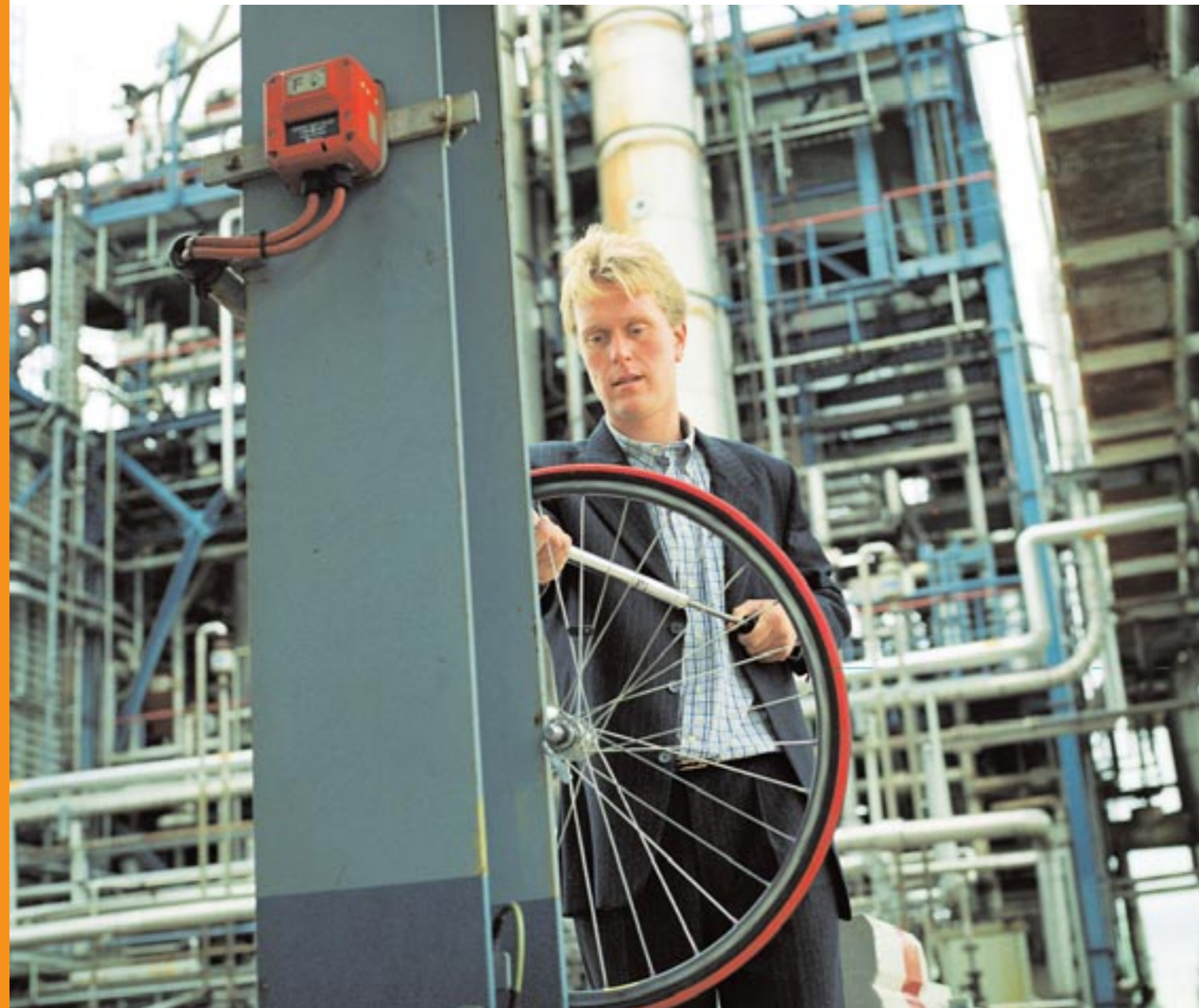
**Favourite sport:** Cycling and Golf

**CSR activities now:** "I'm not responsible for CSR in my daily work, but I do get to deal with it directly in my position. And I'm not alone. The topic is firmly on the agenda of the Inter Company Association, an umbrella network of youth organisations focusing on important issues that young managers have to deal with. We find that we often face similar situations. Targets on CSR as well as traditional aspects of business performance are determined at the top levels of the company. These then have to be translated to the lower levels, bringing them inevitably to the desks of mostly young managers. Yet, at the same time, the business we're in is dominated by bulk production and cost price. Every cent that doesn't add to the value of the product is seen as wasted. This is true even in my business, the production of antibiotics.

You're dealing with huge investments; you're in a company where more money is being put into machines rather than into people; and

anything that doesn't contribute directly to the product comes under the magnifying lens. Now try to introduce a CSR policy. The Inter Company Association basically asked the company directors, 'what exactly would you like to see being implemented?' In response, they organised a seminar at which we all got a chance to put forward our ideas. Predictably, the simplest ones were the best. One idea that I contributed to was the donation of technology that we don't use anymore to poor countries. It no longer has any value for us, and it often offers them a means of production that results in much less waste entering the environment. The company also has the option of sending employees to deliver and set up the technology, as well as establish training programmes and give initial supervision on its use. Not only do you help make a difference in another country, but you also add to the skills of your employees."

**Where do you want to be in 10 years?** "I want to have a good job in a company that I respect. If people ask me where I work, I want to be proud to tell them. Then you know you're in the right place. I definitely wouldn't want to work for a company that didn't tell the truth."  
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## Transport



**Name:** Stéphanie Kessen (1973)

**Job:** Branch Manager, TPG Post

**City:** Capelle aan den IJssel, Netherlands

**Favourite sport:** Running

**CSR activities now:** "All modesty aside, TPG has become a model for CSR in the Netherlands. CEO Peter Bakker also recently received recognition at international level. He sat on the podium at Davos, were Kofi Annan personally thanked him for his commitment. More importantly, our partnership with the UN's World Food Programme has made us aware internally of our power to make a difference by doing what we're good at: moving things around. Our knowledge can help to save people's lives by speeding up the delivery of food. I put my name down as a volunteer when TPG planned to send 40 employees to developing countries. Unfortunately, 800 of my colleagues did the same. Those who were chosen came back full of enthusiasm. They now act as internal ambassadors of the programme by showing photos, telling their stories in the canteen, and contributing to a book of their experiences. They're determined to spread their message throughout the company. As branch manager, I try to encourage this as much as possible, but you have to make sure that it doesn't just occupy the top or middle levels of the business.

The more employees who feel proud and connected to this kind of initiative, the bigger the impact and difference we'll be able to make. This is certainly important at TPG, because our organisation looks like a giant pancake with a pea in the middle, representing the management. Most of the people who work for the company do jobs such as delivering post, driving vans or dealing directly with customers. For example, there was a suggestion to combine our Christmas packets in one large pot for the good cause. However, that turned out to be a very sensitive issue, because the Christmas packets have a huge status attached to them. You hear from people that they will 'decide what to with [their] own money', even when the contributions are voluntary. Perhaps we should adopt a very visible cause, like the former Foster Parents Plan, where you got a photo of a child to give you a tangible sense of what you've donated your money to. It's something authentic. Luckily, the partnership isn't something that will end tomorrow. You also shouldn't think in terms of a finishing point for these kinds of projects. We've only just begun."

**Where do you want to be in 10 years?** "By that time I'd like to be Human Resources manager. I want to work with and for people, to inspire them and be inspired by them. Ultimately, I'd like to do that at international level, working across divisions and national borders."  
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**Name:** Kate Rigge (1973)  
**Job:** CSR Manager with ST (Microelectronics)  
**City:** Milan, Italy  
**Favourite sport:** Tennis

**CSR activities now:** "From my personal perspective, one significant challenge in a high technology sector such as ours is helping people (usually engineers or scientifically-minded people) to transform their mindset and perception of the reality they live and work in. I believe that for a company to 'go supersonic', to break the barrier of the prevailing collective economic model for development (the short-term focus on financial results), people need to perceive things differently: that is, they need to look beyond what currently exists and how things work and start inventing new, more intelligent ways of thinking and doing that work towards the 'greater good'. At ST, we're currently developing a shared information system based on our long-standing Total Quality Management approach to business. According to this approach, 'what gets measured gets done'. Our information system will provide a single tool that people from different departments, dealing with quality, health & safety,

environment, human rights, people management, business ethics etc. can use to track and measure the hundreds of tiny details of our 'holistic' performance on Corporate Responsibility. The challenge is to find ways of identifying and measuring not just the quantitative facts, but the qualitative ones as well: those 'soft', cultural, human elements that so easily slip by unnoticed. Here you need to find ways of building into the system an extra layer of subjective perception or awareness that can raise issues for discussion and bring about greater communication and understanding of key issues relating to Corporate Responsibility."

**Where do you want to be in 10 years?** "I would like to be somewhere at the interface between the business world, the academic world and the world of international politics. I believe that, in order to move towards real sustainable development, we need to create synergy between different social actors at the collective level. I would like to contribute to setting the shared framework (politics), implementing the objectives (business), and training the minds of the future (academia)."  
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## Banking

**Name:** Sabine Vlaming (1973)  
**Job:** Co-ordinator, CSR Steering Group, SNS REAAL Group  
**City:** Utrecht, Netherlands  
**Favourite sport:** Tennis  
**CSR activities now:** "The SNS REAAL Group has entered into a collaboration with the Bartiméus Institute, an organisation committed to helping people who are blind or visually handicapped. We've started adapting all our own information channels, like the use of the Internet, to the needs of this group. Now we're going further and supporting the SNS REAAL Group in a wide range of other activities. It's a way of reaching out to society that doesn't serve any direct interest for the company, even if our banking services are now more accessible to this group. The reward comes from responding to the greater need of the community and finding that your own needs as a company were contained therein. I don't like it when CSR is used to greenwash company efforts that are actually designed to develop market opportunities. You'll often see that happening in the financial world. It's much better to go back to the basics on which the financial services are founded: building client trust."

I see banking as a public good of sorts. It stimulates entrepreneurship, and, through insurance products, it helps to take away some of the risk at the same time. If you reason this way, then you've already made the link to an internal policy. CSR helps to create space for internal entrepreneurship, while also allowing employees to grow by passing more of the responsibility on to them. My age has certainly been an advantage when I talk to staff about these issues. I'm more accessible, I don't pose a threat, and I'm forgiven my inexperience and allowed to make beginner's mistakes. In the meantime I'm growing and developing into a credible ambassador, a role that an older, more experienced manager might find difficult to acquire. My youth also makes me believable. As a young person you want to bring about progress, to renew and change the status quo. You also have the benefit of perspective and distance from the situation because you're new to it."

**Where do you want to be in 10 years?** "Become Director? Who? Me? Only if I'm asked. But let's be frank. CSR isn't a career path, it's a lifestyle. I'd enjoy it more if I could inspire others to the extent that they reach that top spot themselves."  
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