

BUSINESS & HUMAN RIGHTS DGCN PEER LEARNING GROUP



REPORT 2017

GROUP MEMBERS AND ACTIVITIES

Eleven companies from Germany and Italy participated in the 2017 Human Rights Peer Learning Group, convened by the Global Compact Network Germany with support from management consultancy twentyfifty ltd. The participating companies represented the chemical, insurance, logistics, textile, pharmaceutical, extractive, technology and ICT sectors.

Two webinars and two meetings were held throughout 2017, including an exchange with more than 20 representatives from other European Global Compact Networks. The group members were actively involved in preparing the content and its delivery. They presented good practices, joint analysis or lessons learned related to the following topics:

Meeting March	Modern slavery due diligence – Responding to new legal and stakeholder expectations
Webinar May	Integration of human rights due diligence in human resources management
Meeting September	Integration of human rights due diligence across global operations – European Peer Learning Group Exchange with members of the Spanish, Italian, UK and German Global Compact Networks at the Relx Group in London, UK.
Webinar December	Access to remedy in practice – Updates from the UN Forum for Business and Human Rights

In addition to participant contributions, external experts shared experiences and contributed to thematic discussions. This included [Baroness Young of Hornsey](#), a strong advocate for the UK Modern Slavery Act in the UK parliament, Jane Ashton, Director of [Sustainable Development at TUI Group](#), Jantine Werdmuller von Elgg, Global Programme Lead and anti-human trafficking and modern slavery specialist at [Stronger Together](#) and the Organisational Change expert [Paul Gibbons](#).

"The selected topics, like modern slavery and integrating human rights due diligence across business functions, were topical and relevant to my work."

Member of the Peer Learning Group

GROUP MEMBERS' PROGRESS OF EMBEDDING HUMAN RIGHTS

In 2017, participants' human rights due diligence related activities included:

- Set-up and monitoring of a corporate grievance mechanism in accordance with the requirements set by the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights and applicable to all stakeholders of the company;
- Developing a human rights due diligence strategy in collaboration with multiple functions, including sustainability, procurement, environment and health & safety;
- Awareness-raising and work with local management to manage human rights risks and impacts through mandatory trainings for new employees in procurement on basic sustainability and human rights topics and specific risks.

INFO

About the Peer Learning Group

The Human Rights Peer Learning group is an active learning and leadership platform for European companies hosted by the Global Compact Network Germany.

In the group, individuals tasked with steering human rights due diligence processes within their business come together to exchange their experiences, discuss challenges they face and learn from each other on how to overcome barriers to implementation.

Group meetings are held under the Chatham House Rule to allow for an open and honest exchange among practitioners. Group members are free to communicate publicly about their involvement.

In 2017 the members were BASF, Evonik, Deutsche Telekom, Commerzbank, Puma, C&A, Deutsche Bahn, Merck, Munich Re, Wintershall and Telecom Italia.

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LESSONS LEARNED

The end of 2016 and 2017 saw an increase of regulatory action around human rights due diligence. Within the framework of the 2017 activities, members of the PLG exchanged experiences in translating the requirements of the German National Action Plan for Business and Human Rights, the updated UK Modern Slavery Act and the French Duty of Vigilance Law into internal processes.

Insights gained this year on member companies' practices and challenges included:

Managing modern slavery risks across global operations and supply chains

Member companies are integrating modern slavery into human rights due diligence processes. Next to modern slavery risks at production sites and in supply chains, member companies are examining purchasing practices to prevent unnecessary price and time pressure on suppliers that could contribute to exploitation of workers, e.g. short-term orders or short-notice changes in orders. Further, members stressed the need to ensure the protection of employees that raise concerns.

Several group members were among the first of their national peers in publishing Modern Slavery statements and are currently in the process of identifying suitable key performance indicators.

Contributions of the human resources department to human rights due diligence

Member companies discussed ways the human resources function can contribute to effective ongoing human rights due diligence, for example by facilitating the integration of human rights considerations across different departments.

Human rights could be integrated in employee on-boarding processes with support from sustainability. Further human resources could collaborate with procurement to address risks related to local contractors and subcontractors.

Implementing effective grievance mechanisms

As companies continue the review or roll-out of their grievance mechanisms their focus shifts towards ensuring clarity with regard to incoming grievances. Processes are being developed to guide through the grievance process, ensuring that grievances are being evaluated as well as the effectiveness of the responses. Member companies increasingly recognize grievance mechanisms as tools that help to proactively identify and mitigate human rights

risks and chose to communicate about the nature of incoming grievances.

There is a growing understanding that effective grievance mechanisms need to be embedded in local and cultural circumstances, using locally appropriate formats and languages.

"Hearing case studies from other members and engaging with external speakers was helpful to deepen my understanding of the topics on the agenda."

Member of the Peer Learning Group

NEXT YEAR'S ACTIVITIES

Meetings and webinars in 2018 will allow for an ongoing exchange on participants' implementation activities as well as current business and human rights trends. The group participants will jointly prepare meetings or webinars on the following topics:

- Addressing modern slavery risks in the supply chain – developing supplier trainings
- Responsible recruitment in the context of human rights due diligence
- Responsible sourcing through a human rights lens - beyond tier 1
- Fulfilling transparency requirements and communicating effectively on human rights



European Peer Learning Group Meeting in London in September 2017

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