



BUSINESS & HUMAN RIGHTS PEER LEARNING GROUP REPORT 2015

GROUP MEMBERS AND ACTIVITIES

Eight companies from Germany and Italy participated in the Human Rights Peer Learning Group in 2015. The participating companies came from the chemical, insurance, logistics, pharmaceutical, diversified industrials and technology sectors. Two webinars and two meetings were held throughout 2015. The group members were actively involved in preparing the content and its delivery. For instance, they presented good practices, joint analysis or lessons learned related to the following topics:



WEBINAR FEBRUARY	Human rights policy development and stakeholder engagement – challenges and best practices
MEETING MAY	Human rights risk and impact assessments – analysing methodologies and case studies
WEBINAR SEPTEMBER	Measuring, communicating on and rating companies' human rights performance – trends and expectations
MEETING NOVEMBER	Strategic integration of the human rights topic & European Peer Learning Group Exchange with members of the Spanish and the Italian Global Compact Networks

The meetings were held at participants' offices in Düsseldorf and Milano. During the meetings, speakers from the Danish Institute for Human Rights, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and external company representatives shared experiences and contributed to thematic discussions with the group members. twentyfifty and the Global Compact Network Germany supported the preparation, facilitated discussions and exercises and provided updates on key trends and developments related to business and human rights.

ABOUT THE PEER LEARNING GROUP
The Human Rights Peer Learning group is an active learning platform for European companies hosted by the Global Compact Network Germany. The group is open to beginners and more experienced professionals from different sectors and companies of varying sizes. In the learning 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. The meetings of the group are held under Chatham House Rule to allow for an open and honest exchange among practitioners. Group members are free to communicate publicly about their involvement and some – Merck, Munich Re and Telecom Italia – have decided to do so.

GROUP MEMBERS' IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS

In 2015, the participants have worked on the following human rights related topics within their companies:

- The development and publication of a group-wide human rights policy and conceptualisation of a training program to raise internal awareness about human rights policy commitments
- Completion and follow-up of a human rights impact assessment in an emerging market
- A corporate-wide high-level human rights risk assessment
- Completion of a human rights gap assessment, mapping existing management processes against known sector human rights impacts
- A pilot analysis of two supply chains to understand social risks beyond tier 1

"The peer-to-peer exchange and joint learning processes in the peer learning group supported me in shaping Telecom Italia's human rights approach including the development of a human rights policy commitment and a group-wide training program." Giacomo Befo, Telecom Italia

MAJOR LESSONS LEARNED DURING THE YEAR

The discussions around member companies' practices and challenges during the group meetings and webinars highlighted the following general lessons:

- Companies in the group are testing a diversity of ways to **understand and assess their human rights risks and impacts**, e.g. through company-wide risk assessments, assessments of particular supply chains and country impact assessments. Lessons learned relate to the time and effort needed for local external stakeholder engagement; the importance of engaging rightsholders to ensure their perspectives are not overlooked and securing local ownership for the implementation of follow-up activities. The transparent communication and discussion of processes and assessment results with external stakeholders such as civil society representatives remain a challenge.
- For the **strategic integration of the human rights topic**, top-level commitment and the translation of the human rights topic into tangible business relevant topics remain key enabling factors. If supported by top management, policy development and communication can serve as an opportunity to raise awareness internally and engage other relevant functions in the business, e.g. procurement, compliance, product safety or human resources. Such a process can facilitate the integration of the human rights topic in relevant management processes, such as training strategy, risk management, sourcing or product development strategies.
- The UNGP Reporting Framework and the Corporate Human Rights Benchmark exemplify a **general trend of rising external expectations towards measuring corporate human rights performance**. Rating agencies are gradually broadening their requirements; yet their assessment criteria still vary widely in level of detail and scope. Challenges of the group members relate to the selection of ratings, understanding and dealing with the diversity of requirements and the communication about human rights impacts and related due diligence challenges. More attention being given to monitoring human rights performance will inform internal monitoring processes and the development of more sophisticated human rights related KPIs.

SNEAK PEEK AT NEXT YEAR'S ACTIVITIES

Meetings and webinars in 2016 will allow for an ongoing exchange of experiences with participants' implementation activities as well as about current business and human rights trends, with a view to enabling joint learning. The group will welcome a new member from the apparel sector. The group participants have paired up to prepare meetings or webinars about the following topics:

- **Developing a human rights policy & raising internal awareness about human rights policy commitments** – challenges and best practices
- **Human rights due diligence in the supply chain** – workshop with representatives from procurement departments
- **Aligning future business strategy with respecting human rights** – drivers and approaches
- **Access to remedy in practice** – improving existing grievance mechanisms in light of UNGP effectiveness criteria (possibly in combination with European Local Networks Peer Learning Exchange)

If you are interested to learn more about DGCN's business & human rights program, and how you can join or cooperate with the peer learning group please contact:

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