



Warsaw, 6 May 2024

Polish Institute for Human Rights and Business
ul. Mireckiego 25/36
42-208 Częstochowa, Poland
Sygn.: PIHRB / 2024 / 27 / UNGC

COMMUNICATION ON ENGAGEMENT

Period covered: May 2022 – May 2024

Dear Sirs,

Acting on behalf of the Polish Institute for Human Rights and Business (PIHRB), I am pleased to express PIHRB's continuous support for the UN Global Compact and its ten principles.

With this commitment and communication, we renew our intent to advance these principles within our sphere of influence and will make a clear statement of this commitment to our stakeholders and the general public.

We also pledge to continue our participation in the activities of the UN Global Compact where appropriate and feasible, through e.g. awareness raising and capacity building efforts; sharing our human rights and labour rights expertise with other organizations; and other initiatives like partnership projects both in the country and in the EU as well as Eastern Europe and Central Asia region.

Polish Institute for Human Rights and Business (PIHRB): Basic information

The Polish Institute for Human Rights and Business (PIHRB) is an independent, non-profit and impartial centre of expertise on human rights and business. We work with government, business, civil society and trade unions to create welcoming and collaborative spaces for dialogue, learning and creative approaches that help companies do business with respect for human rights and further sustainable development.

Our aim is to advance Human Rights and Business/UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) implementation in Poland and beyond, by contributing through research and activities that influence the everyday practice of all market actors, policy and legislation development as well as educational activities, to improved respect for human rights and sustainable development principles in business context. PIHRB brings together a group of experts with advanced academic expertise and on-the-ground operational experience of working with human rights & business issues from variety of perspectives (public sector, trade unions, CSOs & academia as well as experience of advising business), who are recognized for their expertise in Poland and abroad.

PIHRB is convinced that only enhanced and open cooperation and interaction of all actors can result in most effective and fair solutions for all, and thus we:

- Raise awareness and improve **business** competencies in the area of human rights to help them understand what human rights are and how to respect them in everyday conduct (e.g.



presentations at business-oriented events, generic and tailored trainings and workshops on human rights in the business context, research, publications).

- Build capacity of **NGOs and Trade Unions** to enhance effectiveness of their action in the area of human rights and business (e.g. workshops, research, mailing list, publications, coordination of the CSR Watch Coalition). PIHRB has also co-initiated creation of the CSR Watch Coalition Poland, to create a representative partner for government in the area of human rights and business, as well as cooperates with international NGOs platforms like European Coalition for Corporate Justice and OECD Watch.
- Provide support to the **public administration** in efforts leading to introduction of legislation and policies promoting and supporting responsible business conduct (e.g. contributing to the consultations, research, member of the Group on SD & CSR, conducting social audits of manufacturing companies on behalf of (foreign) export credit agencies to help them assess the investment risk and leverage impact on the supply chain of their credit-recipients).
- Undertake **education and awareness raising activities** aimed at all stakeholder groups and to this end cooperate also with recognized academic institutions.

This Communication aims to present a general overview of key activities and projects undertaken by PIHRB in the past two years with an aim to advance respect for human rights in business and support the ten principles and mission of the UN Global Compact.

MONITORING and ADVOCACY

Since the beginning, UNGPs implementation is at the core of our attention, and thus **in the reporting period we continued to monitor the implementation of the second Polish National Action Plan for the Implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights 2021-2024**. To that end we have used the requests for public information procedure to obtain information about the progress in implementation and plans for the future NAP.

Across the whole reporting period we have been also engaging strongly in advocacy aimed at Polish government officials, MPs and Members of the European Parliament aimed to encourage them to vote in support of the adoption at the EU level of the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive in 2024. To make our voice better heard, we also took an active part in the #HoldBizAccountable and #Justice is everybody's business campaigns carried out by the network of NGOs at the EU and national levels. Among the events organized and actions undertaken it is worth certainly to mention our first press conference held on 24 October 2023 "Business and human rights - protection and respect in white gloves", the task of which was to draw the attention of politicians and the media to cases of human rights violations in Poland and around the world, to present the legislative context with particular emphasis on the CSDD directive and presenting demands to the Polish government and business.

In 2022 the **Working Group on Workers operating within Committee on Sustainable Development and CSR, an auxiliary body to the Minister of Funds and Regional Development** [prior to that we contributed to the work of its predecessors i.e. the Minister of Investment and Economic Development and Minister of Economy (2014-2015); with Ministry of Economy (2014-2015)], which we were chairing since 2018, completed its tasks and was closed. We continue to be engaged in policy development at the national level as **a member of the Working Group on the Development of Non-Financial Reporting**



and a **member of the Working Group on Due Diligence** (since autumn 2022), which look at the transposition into domestic law of the EU legislation (e.g. CSRD /ESRS).

Finally, as an **Electronics Watch Monitoring Partner** we continue to monitor respect for workers' rights in electronics' factories in Poland.

To enhance the impact of our advocacy activities we are active in the regional/global thematic networks and coalitions, with European Coalition for Corporate Justice and OECD Watch, being the key ones. To support their functioning we either engage in the specific thematic work (e.g. as a member of the WG on mHRDD) or contribute through engagement in the governance structures (e.g. as a member of the OECD Watch Coordination Committee).

AWARENESS RAISING & EDUCATION

Despite the continuous efforts, the level of awareness of human rights and business issues is still below the threshold that would allow fast and visible changes in the society. Though there are some progressive actions taken both by business and by public administration, there still remains an unproportionally big area of commercial, political and social life calling for grassroots involvement. While we continued with some earlier projects, e.g. translating "The Art of Human Rights" - [the BHR fact sheets](#) - aimed at explaining in simple way how human rights should be understood (and respected) in the business context developed in previous reporting period into Russian and English to make them accessible also to non-Polish speakers in Poland and beyond, we have put a lot of energy into ensuring that BHR agenda starts to appear more strongly across Eastern European and Central Asia region. To that end we have developed and carried out a 1.5 year project "Lighthouse-keepers: Business and Human Rights Cooperation Network" (<https://pihrb.org/lighthouse-keepers/>), completed in July 2023. The aim of the project was to educate professionals and spur creation and develop a network of BHR experts, with an aim to raise awareness of business and human rights in the region, through a number of activities, incl.:

- The core (5 full days of online lectures and workshops) and extended (additional webinars, possibility to write a case study with support of the mentors, in-person conference) Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia BHR Summer Academy (2022 – 2023). In the course of the project 29 professionals from various sectors and approx. dozen countries have obtained knowledge, skills and competences that allow them to support the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in their respective countries, which will contribute to improvement in the respect for human rights in the context of business operations.
- Development of additional learning materials and CEECA BHR Hub content.
- Series of workshops on the principles and standards that should govern interactions between NGOs and Business, aimed to create a starting point and a foundation for the universal standard on this issue.

The project was led by the PIHRB, in partnership with Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University in Kharkiv, ALDA Association from Iceland and the Icelandic Ombudsman for Children, as well as in strong collaboration with the Global Business Initiative for Human Rights, and with support of the ICRC, UNDP Istanbul Hub, CEEBHRA and CEE BHR Resource Hub. The expert network that was formed as a result of this project is active with its members collaborating with varying intensity with each other, what contributed to improved and better informed advocacy, embedding of BHR in company operations and training for affected communities. Detailed information is available at the project website <https://pihrb.org/lighthouse-keepers/> and also in a short booklet presenting the key outputs that were



developed during the project, including teaching resources: BUSINESS & HUMAN RIGHTS IN CEE & CENTRAL ASIA PROJECT OUTPUTS: 2022/2023 PUBLICATIONS AND VIDEOS (https://pihrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Lighthouse-keepers_Project_Results_PubsLearning_BOOKLET_last_ver-3.pdf). We plan to organize a second edition of the Summer Academy in 2024.

We also continued to engage in a number of awareness raising activities around due diligence legislation and the reasons for it, aimed at the general public, including organizing on December 8, 2023, at the Atlantic cinema in Warsaw, a screening of the documentary film "Discount workers" and an interview with the director, Christopher Patz. The Polish premiere of the film, organized by PIHRB, was not only our contribution to the celebration of International Human Rights Day and the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the UN and was an event accompanying the Watch Docs festival, but also an appeal to the Polish government to support ambitious provisions during the negotiations of the text of the CSDD directive in trilogue.

The year 2024 we have started with an international conference on CSDDD - the first in Poland – organized on 26 January 2024 in collaboration with the Polish Bar Association and University of Warsaw and attended by over 150 professionals from business and legal circles, in-person and online. The event aimed to bring it to the attention of the professionals and academics whose voice will be important during the transposition and enforcement of the CSDDD this piece of the EU legislation and opportunities and challenges linked to its implementation. Detailed information about the event can be found in Polish and English at <https://pihrb.org/konferencja-miedzynarodowa-od-soft-law-do-wiazacych-regulacji-jak-wdrazac-i-egzekwować-csddd-26-1-2024/>.

We did also organize a number of one-off events focused on particular issues that we wanted to bring to the attention of broader public, as well as contributed as expert speakers to a number of other events. Some of them are recorded and available at: <https://pihrb.org/webinary/>

Finally, we have also provided commentaries and insights into newspaper articles dedicated to the DD topic. Some of them are listed at: <https://pihrb.org/publikacje/> in section "Nasz głos w mediach" (Our voice in the media).

CAPACITY BUILDING

Our capacity building work focused on both developing and promoting tools aimed to support business in its HRDD related efforts and strengthening other actors, incl. NGOs, in better understanding the context to be able to support those affected adversely by business activities. We have translated the well-received by business guidebook [Diversity and Inclusive Culture Step by Step. A Practical Guide for Organizations](#) into English and Russian, and organized a webinar promoting its additional versions with invited guest speakers from the region. We have also carried out a number of workshops, webinars and seminars focused on broadly understood BHR but in particular Green Deal-related legislation, culminating in December 2023, with a webinar for the network of people associated with the CEE&CA BHR Association and a group of people interested in legal topics. Understanding the EU regulatory context in the area of the Green Deal is important in joint planning and carrying out advocacy activities in the next year, but also for all actors being ready for in the EU and extraterritorial impact of the EU legislation.

Among the events we organized, one of the most important was the practice oriented, two-day International Conference on Business & Human Rights in Central Eastern Europe and Central Asia (June 1-2, 2023), which took place at and in partnership with the Vistula Academy of Finance and Business, part



of which consisted of workshops and game simulating the challenges of conducting business in a responsible manner. It was attended by, among others: graduates of the CEE&CA Business and Human Rights Summer Academy 2022. The conference also saw the premiere of the important publication “How not to Make Business and Human Rights in Central & Eastern Europe and Central Asia” (<https://pihrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/PIHRB-WPS-1-2023-How-not-to-do-business-and-human-rights-in-CEE-CA.pdf>), presenting 15 case studies from 8 countries in the region. The publication is currently available in four language versions: English, Polish, Ukrainian and Russian, and makes both another learning material for business but also teaching material that can be used for teaching in higher academia in the region.

During the reported period, PIHRB had also opportunity to support – via workshops and trainings - companies on commercial basis, in understanding the Polish operational context with respect to human rights risks, as well as in developing their own path to due diligence and taking the first step on that path - adopting a human rights policy. As an Electronics Watch Monitoring Partner we are also engaging in building capacity of the trade unions.

Finally, we have carried out several – paid and unpaid - online workshops focused on the recent legislative developments at the EU level and BHR/UNGPs more generally, with an aim to enable them more conscious engagement and its implementation.

RESEARCH

In the reporting period we have completed several research assignments, including co-developing "Scoping study on the Status of the Implementation of the UNGPs on Business and Human Rights in Eastern Europe and Central Asia" covering 18 countries commissioned by UNDP Istanbul as well as an addendum to it (June 2023), for which the Polish Institute for Human Rights and Business coordinated a team of experts, conclusions of which were presented in November 2022 at the Forum on Business and Human Rights in Eastern Europe & Central Asia.

Additionally, PIHRB collaborated with the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights PIHRB to organize consultations for the region of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia on the human rights of the LGBTIQ+ people in the business context. The report will be shortly available at the OHCHR website. Current research projects include development of the analysis and recommendations concerning the implementation of the CSDDD into Polish legal system and practice of the administration and business, as well as engagement in pro-bono research legal network aimed to develop European Model Contract Clauses for Supply Chain (project led by prof. Scheltema of University of Rotterdam) to provide companies with a good and UNGP compliant model clauses that can be used in order to secure possibility of the value chain verification and increase level of respect for human rights. Several other minor research projects are also underway – all of relevance to the UNGPs and thus first two UNGC principles implementation.

The conclusions and recommendations drawn from our research but also broader expertise on what should be changed to make the business world more people-friendly had an opportunity to resound not only in Poland but also in international fora, including the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights in Geneva, during which PIHRB collaborated with the UN WG on BHR and Y.Mudryi University to prepare the CEE regional sessions. An (uncomplete) list of our presentations and interventions at various events can be found at our website - <https://pihrb.org/prezentacje-i-wystapienia-eksperckie/>

We regularly publish reports, policy papers, as well as articles aimed for general public with an aim to make this complex area more accessible to all. Some of PIHRB’s experts articles and other papers include:



- Beata Faracik, Aleksandra Wardak, Edukujemy i wzmacniamy nowe pokolenie ekspertów, [in:] UNGC Network Poland Yearbook 2023, October 2023
- Beata Faracik, Jernej Letnar Cernic and Olena Uvarova, The Status of the Implementation of the UNGPs on Business and Human Rights in Europe and Central Asia., UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). Istanbul: United Nations Development Programme, 2023.
- Beata Faracik, Biznes w czasie wojny (Business at the time of war), [in:] Marcin Kilanowski (red.) „Biznes i prawa człowieka – czas globalnych przemian”, Global Compact Network Poland, December 2022
- Szlendak, M., Wardak, A., „Deliberateria – nowy model dialogu społecznego jako narzędzie demokracji polskich samorządów”, [in:] D. Sadowska, „Standard minimum praw człowieka w polskim samorządzie”, 2022.

MAKING THE REGIONAL VOICE HEARD & REGIONAL NETWORK BUILDING

We have continued to support the Central & Eastern European Business & Human Rights Association, which – after merging with the CEECA Network created after the first Summer Academy, became the CEE&Central Asia BHR Association. Apart from regularly updating the CEE and Central Asia Resource Hub, we have organized an international conference, and a number of networking virtual meetings and webinars dedicated to specific topics like EU Green Deal legislation. We are also engaged in mentoring colleagues who decided to start NGOs focused on BHR in their own countries.

Additionally, president of the board of PIHRB has co-lead as one of the three Guest Editors the work on the special issue of the Business and Human Rights Journal dedicated to Central and Eastern European Region, which was published in the spring of 2024.

We have also used opportunities to create a space to speak at international events, such as UN Forum on BHR or expert webinars, to the members of the network, to bring their voices and perspectives to the attention of the broader BHR community and help shine light on their work in their respective countries. We have also collaborated in organization and spoke at sessions dedicated to the BHR developments in the CEE region at the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights in 2022 and 2023 with the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights and Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University from Kharkiv, Ukraine.

We undertake efforts to hold the events in English and have them translated into at least one more language of the region to reach broader audience.

As mentioned earlier, we have also contributed in expert speaker capacity to the Regional Eastern Europe and Central Asia UNDP Business & Human Rights Forum in 2022 and developed and presented the scoping study of the BHR implementation in the 18 countries of the ECIS region, as commissioned by UNDP.

GLOBAL COMPACT NETWORK POLAND RELATED ACTIVITIES

We have also engaged in activities aimed at the Polish Members of the UNGC, including leading a training on human rights in business context (as part of the Governance Programme) as well as contributing to annual Human Rights days in December and other events, and providing opinion pieces for the annual BHR publications and GCNP Annual Reports.

Further information about our activities is available on our website in the “end of the year summaries”:

- for 2022 at <https://pihrb.org/podsumowanie-roku-2022/>
- for 2023 at <https://pihrb.org/podsumowanie-roku-2023/>.



Last not least, we are undertaking efforts to ensure that also our day to day operations have smallest possible impact on our surrounding, e.g. we try to reduce the use of paper for office purposes and use only eco- and recycled paper, also for printed publications; do not produce gadgets and ensure that catering at our events is vegan/vegetarian to show that such dishes can form a tasty alternative to meat.

We will continue to offer our expertise in order to undertake variety of initiatives engaging different actors, shaping strong partnerships and promoting mission of UNGC as well as support companies to build their capacity in sustainability by following the ten principles of the Global Compact.

Sincerely Yours

Beata Faracik
President of the Board

The Polish Institute for Human Rights and Business (PIHRB) is a leading centre of expertise in Central and Eastern Europe, specializing in human rights in the context of business activity. We are independent and apolitical. Our expertise and hands-on practical experience allow us to contribute to expanding BHR knowledge, developing human rights practice in business and supporting development of the legislation and public policies in this area in the region and beyond. We create a space for dialogue for effective solutions aimed at a world, where business respects all human rights. PIHRB was established in 2014 as a non-profit foundation and is registered in the National Court Register under number 0000505623.