



Press statement

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From law to action: New centre to strengthen workers' rights through human rights due diligence laws

On 20 March 2025, global trade unions and representatives of the German government will formally announce the creation of the Human Rights Due Diligence Competence Centre, set to open later this year. The Centre will support trade unions in leveraging national and EU legislation – like the German Act on Corporate Due Diligence Obligations in Supply Chains and EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) – to secure workers' rights across global value chains and corporate operations.

UNI Global Union (UNI) and IndustriALL Global Union are working together with project partners in Germany, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and German union confederation the DGB. Initial funding has been provided by the Initiative for Global Solidarity, a GIZ programme supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

"The transition from voluntary guidelines to mandatory human rights due diligence in Germany and in Europe is a landmark moment for workers' rights worldwide. We now have a legal framework to hold multinational corporations truly accountable for respecting human rights across their value chains and across their operations. This shift isn't just a huge boost for the global trade union movement's ability to support workers advocating for their rights; it also helps businesses by levelling the competitive playing field. It puts the brakes on the destructive race to the bottom that leaves workers vulnerable around the world." Alke Boessiger, Deputy General Secretary, UNI Global Union.

At the 20 March event, union leaders, policymakers and employers will discuss the Centre's role in ensuring due diligence laws make global supply chains more resilient, fair, and accountable.

"The global trade union movement has a strong interest in leveraging human rights due diligence laws to strengthen workers' rights worldwide. By collaborating with other global unions, we can bridge the gap between unions in countries where these laws originate, like Germany, and those in supply chains where human rights violations are most prevalent. The new Competence Centre will serve as a crucial resource, providing capacity-building and legal expertise to ensure that human rights due diligence obligations translate into tangible improvements in working conditions across global value chains." says Atle Høie, IndustriALL general secretary.

"Strong laws need strong cooperation to make a real difference for workers. The creation of the Human Rights Due Diligence Competence Centre is a testament to the power of collaboration between trade unions, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and Friedrich Ebert Foundation in turning legal frameworks into concrete action.



By bringing together expertise and resources, this Centre will ensure that human rights due diligence laws are not just words on paper but a powerful tool to strengthen workers' rights and corporate accountability in global supply chains. " says Yasmin Fahimi, Chair of the DGB.

The Centre's steering committee, comprised of UNI, IndustriALL and DGB, will focus on three key objectives:

1. Build capacity for trade unions in countries with human rights due diligence laws – starting with Germany – and across global supply chains, enabling them to use corporate due diligence obligations more effectively in defending workers' rights.
2. Support strategic interventions using HRDD to safeguard workers' rights and prevent violations in high priority value chains.
3. Advocate for effective human rights due diligence implementation by companies and policy makers.

To ensure broad representation and collaboration, additional trade unions and subject matter experts will be invited to join an advisory group, which will help shape the Centre's strategy and coordinate action where necessary.

The Competence Centre will be registered as a non-profit foundation in the Netherlands and will operate virtually without a physical office location. It will be officially launched in the fourth quarter of 2025.

Background

The German Supply Chain Due Diligence Act has been in effect since January 2023 and will be a key focus of the Centre's activities. The Supply Chain Act requires large companies (over 1,000 employees) to conduct human rights due diligence to identify, mitigate and prevent risks of abuse of human rights and environmental harm in their global operations and supply chains.

The EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) was adopted in June 2024 and must be implemented by all EU member states from 2026 onwards. The Centre's mandate will be expanded once the CSDDD is in force. In February 2025, the European Commission introduced an "Omnibus proposal" to amend multiple sustainability-related laws, including the CSDDD. Whilst the stated aim of the Omnibus proposal is to reduce bureaucracy, the proposed amendments would weaken key provisions of the Directive and there is [significant opposition](#) from trade unions and civil society groups to the Omnibus proposal.

UNI Global Union brings together workers from over 150 different countries in the service economy to win better jobs and better lives. UNI helps workers build power by growing unions through organizing; protecting and expanding collective bargaining; and holding corporations and governments accountable to workers, not just an elite few. It has negotiated over 50 global agreements with multinational employers.



IndustriALL Global Union represents 50 million workers in 130 countries in the mining, energy and manufacturing sectors and is a force in global solidarity taking up the fight for better working conditions and trade union rights around the world. IndustriALL fights for another model of globalization and a new economic and social model that puts people first, based on democracy and social justice.

The **German Trade Union Confederation (DGB)** is the umbrella organization for eight member unions, representing 5.7 million workers. As the voice of workers in politics, business, and society, the DGB advocates for fair working conditions, social justice, and strong labor rights. With a nationwide presence and a commitment to democracy, equality, and international solidarity, the DGB works to ensure workers' rights are protected—both in Germany and across global supply chains..

The **Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)** founded in 1925, is the oldest political foundation in Germany. As a non-profit foundation, it is linked to the labour movement in its pursuit of freedom, justice and solidarity- at national, regional and global level.

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