

Terms of Reference

Head of Trade Union Competence Centre for Human Rights Due Diligence

Publication of Terms of Reference: Friday, 20th June 2025

Deadline for applications: Friday, 4th July 2025, 17:00 CEST

About

We are building a team to launch the new Trade Union Competence Centre for Human Rights Due Diligence, starting with three key positions: Head of the Centre, Strategic Legal and Policy Advisor, and Programme Manager. All positions are listed here: <https://uniglobalunion.org/jobs/>

The Competence Centre's mission is to ensure that human rights due diligence strengthens respect for workers' rights throughout value chains, especially the enabling rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining.

With the shift from voluntary to mandatory human rights due diligence (HRDD) in Europe and beyond, there is a significant opportunity for trade unions to use HRDD laws to hold companies accountable for respecting workers' rights. Trade unions need to strengthen their capacity and strategies to fully leverage new legal frameworks, including deepening their knowledge of the laws and promoting awareness of best practices, as well as integrating HRDD strategies into their global networks. UNI Global Union, IndustriALL Global Union, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, and the German trade union confederation DGB have joined forces to establish the Competence Centre, which will develop this capacity across the global trade union movement.

The Competence Centre will be set up as a non-profit Foundation in the Netherlands. There will be no physical office, so the team will work remotely or potentially from the office of a partner trade union.

The priorities for 2025-27 include establishing an HRDD Helpdesk to provide guidance, support, and training for trade unions worldwide, as well as implementing pilot programs in two priority value chains (garments and critical minerals) to test and refine HRDD strategies within global union networks.

The Initiative for Global Solidarity (IGS) has been supporting the establishment of the Competence Centre since July 2024. IGS is commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by GIZ.

The role

The Head of the Competence Centre will provide strategic and operational leadership to establish the Centre as the leading resource for trade unions on human rights due diligence (HRDD). This role will drive the implementation of the Centre's strategy, guide its development as

a credible and sustainable institution, and ensure its services and partnerships support worker-led HRDD approaches across global value chains.

Key responsibilities include:

- Lead the implementation of the Centre's two-year strategy and workplan.
- Develop and execute a long-term financing and fundraising strategy to support the Centre's sustainability.
- Coordinate governance and reporting processes through the Steering Committee.
- Establish and manage an expert Advisory Group to guide the Centre's strategic direction.
- Build and maintain partnerships with trade unions, companies, donors, and policy actors to advance the Centre's mission.
- Represent the Centre in high-level advocacy spaces to promote effective, worker-led HRDD.
- Develop and oversee the Centre's communications strategy to enhance visibility and influence.
- Supervise and support a multidisciplinary team, fostering collaboration and performance.
- Ensure the operational effectiveness of the Centre, including digital systems, data management, and financial oversight.
- Report to the Steering Committee, comprising representatives from UNI Global Union, IndustriALL Global Union, and the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB).

Skills & Experience

The Head of the Competence Centre will bring proven leadership experience within the trade union movement or allied human rights and labour organisations. The ideal candidate will have a strong understanding of global value chains and the evolving legal landscape surrounding human rights due diligence (HRDD), along with experience in building new initiatives, engaging stakeholders at a senior level, and managing programs, people, and resources. They will be a strategic thinker, a strong communicator, and a values-driven leader committed to making the Centre a trusted, practical resource for the global labour movement.

Key Criteria

The Steering Committee will consider the following criteria when selecting the successful candidate:

- **Professional Experience:** At least 10 years of progressive experience in trade unions, labour rights, human rights, or international development, with significant experience in leadership or strategic coordination roles.
- **Education:** A university degree in labour studies, law, public policy, human rights, international relations, or a related field is required. A postgraduate degree is strongly preferred.

- **Trade Union Knowledge:** Direct experience working in or with trade unions, with a strong understanding of trade union structures, campaigns, and approaches to protecting workers' rights globally.
- **HRDD Expertise:** Knowledge of human rights due diligence frameworks, instruments, and laws, and their relevance to labour rights enforcement in global supply chains.
- **Organisational Leadership:** Demonstrated ability to lead small teams or organisations, including experience managing strategy implementation, budgets, and operational systems.
- **Fundraising & Resource Mobilisation:** Experience developing and implementing fundraising strategies, securing donor support, and managing grants or core funding.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Strong track record of engaging with a diverse range of stakeholders—especially policymakers, industry actors, labour organisations, and civil society—at a senior level.
- **Communications & Influence:** Excellent communication skills, including public speaking, high-level advocacy, and media engagement. Ability to represent the Centre with credibility and impact.
- **Initiative & Adaptability:** Experience establishing new initiatives or organisations, with the ability to navigate uncertainty and shape institutional culture and direction.
- **Languages:** Fluency in English is required. Proficiency in additional languages—particularly German, Spanish, or French—is a strong asset.

Hiring process

To apply for this role, please submit a CV (maximum of three pages) and a cover letter (maximum of two pages) in English, describing your motivation, skills, and experience, to hr@uniglobalunion.org.

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Interviews

The Steering Committee will review and shortlist applications according to the criteria above. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an online first interview from July 17th to 18th. Second round interviews will take place at the end of July.

Hiring terms and conditions

The successful candidate will be hired as an independent contractor or on secondment.¹ for the first 18 months of setting up the Competence Centre. The contract will initially be with UNI Global Union as the main grant-holder for the Competence Centre's funding.

Location: The preferred location is within Europe, and candidates must have the right to work in the country where they are based.

The role is envisaged as a full-time role, but part-time hours can be discussed. Competitive compensation will be offered, depending on skills and experience.

For questions about this role, please contact alke.boessiger@uniglobalunion.org

¹ Candidates may apply for this role as a secondment from their current employer. In this case, please specify this in your application.