

***Call for Papers:
Business and Human Rights Workshop for PhD
researchers and early career researchers
(27 September 2021, Ljubljana, Slovenia)***

We live in a time, which is heavily marked by globalisation and our daily lives are very much affected by these phenomenon - from economic, technological, geostrategic, socio-cultural, informational and ecological to political and ethical. This process of widening and deepening interconnectedness and interdependence has brought with it many positive sides like outlooks of greater economic prosperity, access to the global market, more equal opportunities for many, the breaking of local monopolies, the exchange of knowledge and ideas etc. On the other hand, it has also brought some more negative sides like unjust economic exploitation, diminished cultural diversity, lower standards of democratic accountability, etc. (Justinek 2019). Globalisation has changed our lives beyond recognition and, with the development of new technologies, no working practice or job will ever be quite the same again. Regardless of whether you are a plumber, construction worker, CEO, bureaucrat, athlete, logger, pilot or a diplomat, the Internet and “the app revolution” have had a huge impact on our daily routines (Justinek 2018). Over recent decades, globalisation has stirred up a number of positive and negative developments in national and international environments (Letnar Čerňič, 2010).

In this regard also a shift in the business and corporate sector has been on the move. Especially is this the case with multinational companies (MNCs), where often many opportunities to lower the costs of production were implemented down the supply chains and across the world. There is course nothing wrong with optimisation of processes or being more productive, yet the problems occurs, once these cost downgrading go hand in hand with HR downgrading. Unfortunately, this has been often exercised. In recent decades, endemic worker rights violations have been documented including wage theft and violations (Anner 2019), gender-based violence (Evans 2017, Selwyn et al. 2019), unsafe working conditions and dangerous levels of productivity (Mezzadri 2017), and infringements on freedom of association (Egels-Zandén and Merk 2014) etc.

Business and human rights has in the last decades reached crossroads where seminal decisions need to be adopted on how to move forward. Participants in the global economic and financial milieu directly affect the day-to-day level of respect and protection of the human rights of vulnerable individuals. On one hand, corporations create jobs, tax revenues and economic growth, while, on the other, some of them attract constant criticism due to their lack of human rights protection. The dilemma that remains unanswered is this: how should transnational and other corporations most effectively respect and protect human rights without compromising their primary business objectives? Several different binding national, regional and international initiatives how to move forward have been adopted in recent years. However, are they sufficient to protect dignity of rights-holders and grant them access to effective justice in the case of corporate related-human rights abuses?

Additionally, the year 2020 was heavily marked by the Covid 19 pandemic and the year 2021 will be marked by the economic recovery. Additionally, we have witnessed the return of Keynesianism practically everywhere around the world, even in countries where liberal economic concepts have been in place for decades. What kind of consequences will that have for public policies and public finances in the future, we shall see in the years to come (Justinek 2021)? Yet, the business sector will for sure try to adopt and exercise several activities in order to return to business as usual (business before pandemic) as soon as possible – hopefully not on the account of HR violations around the world.

This workshop on Business and Human Rights aims to give voice and forum to up-and-coming researchers in the field of business and human rights in order to present their papers in progress and provide them with comments and suggestions. Successful applicants will have to submit short summary (2000-2500 words) of their on-going research. We will cover accommodation expenses for selected applicants.

The will take place as a part of one-day conference on 27 September 2021 at Faculty of Government and European Studies of New University, Ljubljana, Slovenia on recent developments on business and human rights. The conference will in the first part feature two sessions with senior experts in business and human rights, whereas its second part will be dedicated to Business and Human Rights Workshop for PhD researchers and early career researchers. Selected papers will also be considered for publication in *International Journal of Diplomacy and Economy* (Inderscience Publishing, London).

Workshop format: The workshop will take place in hybrid format, both in person in Ljubljana at New University and via Zoom. Please send abstracts (max. 300 words) and short bio by 23 August 2021 to: jernej.letnar@fds.nova-uni.si and gorazd.justinek@fds.nova-uni.si.

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