



**Explore Implementation Strategies for Human Rights in Corporate Practice:
Call to Support Action-Oriented Human Rights Research through a
Business and Human Rights Clinic**

*at the Geneva Center for Business and Human Rights -
Geneva School of Economics and Management -
University of Geneva*

Deadline: November 29, 2020

On November 29, 2020, Swiss citizens will vote on the Responsible Business Initiative, which proposes to make human rights due diligence mandatory by law. Whether the initiative goes far enough or too far has become an increasingly polarized debate. However, both advocates and opponents of the initiative agree that respecting human rights matters for business success and must become part of corporate practice.

Many companies in Switzerland have already begun addressing human rights challenges in their core business practices. Several Swiss companies are among the founding members of the UN Global Compact. Yet, there are still many implementation challenges for companies that operate in different industry contexts.

This call is an invitation to explore effective approaches to common implementation challenges in the human rights context by supporting a new educational initiative in Switzerland. It also offers companies a concrete way to contribute to what the UN Global Compact and the UN Working Group for Business and Human Rights calls “The Decade of Action”.

Support a Business and Human Rights Clinic at the Geneva School of Economics and Management

The Geneva Center for Business and Human Rights (GCBHR) was founded at the Geneva School of Economics and Management (GSEM) in November 2019 and is directed by Professor Dorothée Baumann-Pauly. The GCBHR supports companies in the development of business models that allow for profits and principles to coexist. It conducts research on challenges faced by businesses in the implementation of human rights and has successfully integrated business students in its work in the past. The GCBHR intends to launch a clinic on business and human rights (“Business and Human Rights Clinic”) in Spring 2021. The creation of this Clinic will further institutionalize GCBHR’s work with students and companies on practical implementation challenges.



How does the Business and Human Rights Clinic work?

Clinics have been a consistent feature of legal education in the U.S. since the 1960s. Examples in European law schools emerged many decades later and in Switzerland, the faculty of law at the University of Geneva established a clinic in 2017. But clinics do not yet exist at business schools. To our knowledge, the Business and Human Rights Clinic will be the **first clinic at a European business school**. By accepting this call, you will be a part of a pioneering educational initiative that will create value for business students and industry alike.

Clinics are based on a proven pedagogical concept that creates value for companies and participating students. They incentivize action-oriented research and enable a closer collaboration between academia and industry. For students, they present real practical challenges provide learning opportunities that bridge the gap between theory and practice. Tackling real business challenges in the human rights context will enable business students to apply theoretical concepts to practice and gain applied skills. These skills will be most important once they are themselves in roles that require managing human rights challenges in corporate practice. For companies, clinics offer well-researched insights and practical recommendations on specific topics of corporate interest. Clinics provide companies with access to experts specialized in human rights in the corporate context and talented young minds that think outside the box and introduce fresh perspectives on issues. As such, clinics are comparable to consulting projects that are addressed by a mixed team of experts and students.

The Business and Human Rights Clinic will be offered as an elective course for students in the new Master program for Responsible Management that will start in Fall 2021. The GCBHR will publish a call for applications for the Business and Human Rights Clinic and select the most talented and motivated students for participation. Each cohort will comprise 5-10 students that will work closely with the director of the GCBHR and two dedicated team members. There will be weekly seminar-style meetings to discuss research methodology, timelines, and progress. The insights of corporate practitioners will be integral to the research process and there will be close interactions between the research team and the companies affected by the specific challenge. Companies need to be willing to support the research process by potentially providing data and access to interview partners within the corporation.

Explore implementation strategies for Business and Human Rights challenges with the Geneva Center for Business and Human Rights

Support the creation of the Business and Human Rights Clinic at the GCBHR by committing to a contribution between 5'000 CHF and 30'000 CHF before November 29. The funding request has a wide range to also allow small companies to support this initiative. ***The Business and Human Rights Clinic will be launched in Spring 2021 only if at least four companies commit to funding it.*** This consortium funding model ensures the academic independence of the Business and Human Rights Clinic's research. The students will work together with the GCBHR team over the course of four months on one selected challenge (see details below). The results will be presented publicly and a brief report with key recommendations will be published by the GCBHR.



Why should companies contribute now?

All companies that contribute to the creation of the Business and Human Rights Clinic will be mentioned on the website of the GCBHR, which will be launched on its first birthday, November 25, 2020. ***All contributors will be publicly announced on the GCBHR website and on social media channels on Human Rights Day, December 10, 2020.***

Contributing companies will be eligible to pitch a practical business and human rights challenge that they wish to be undertaken by the Business and Human Rights Clinic.

Topics can be specific to their industry context (e.g. How can we address human rights challenges in one specific commodity during Covid-19? How can we respect human rights in one specific fragile country? How can we mitigate human rights risks for one specific operational process?) or general (e.g. How can we best embed human rights in corporate governance? How can we prioritize risks in very large global supply chains?).

The director of the GCBHR together with two members of GCBHR's advisory council will select one of the submitted challenges for the initial student cohort to undertake. The topic of the first challenge will be announced on December 20, 2020.

Show your company's commitment to integrating human rights in corporate business models by supporting this timely educational initiative!

Contact

For more information about the work of the GCBHR, please visit our website:

<https://www.unige.ch/gsem/gcbhr>

For more information on the Business and Human Rights Clinic, please contact Pascale Chavaz:

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Key Dates

- **29 November 2020:** (Referendum on the Responsible Business Initiative): Deadline for companies to commit contributions
- **10 December 2020:** (International Human Rights Day): Announcement of the contributing companies on the website of the GCBHR
- **20 December 2020:** Announcement of the selected business and human rights challenge for the first cohort
- **1 February 2021:** Start of the first cohort's work
- **31 June 2021:** Presentation of the first cohort's results to company and publication of their brief report