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Slovak National Centre for Human Rights – Business and Human Rights Work

This document highlights the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights' business and human rights strategy and how they established a Focal Point to work on the topic.

LEVERAGING MUTUAL LEARNING AND THE NHRI.EU PROJECT TO INTEGRATE THE CONCEPT OF BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS INTO DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS

After staff members at the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (the Centre) completed the EU.NHRI business and human rights course, the Centre applied for a micro grant offered under the EU.NHRI project to establish a stable foundation in the field of business and human rights. When deciding on the concept of the project, three main criteria were considered: the sum awarded (approximately 15 000 EUR), implementation timeframe (6 months) and sustainability of the project after the funding period ended.

The Centre tried to avoid any one-time activities (e.g. stand-alone conferences) and instead focused on how to integrate the concept of business and human rights into its

day-to-day operations. The idea of a National Focal Point for Business and Human Rights (the "Focal Point") arose, drawing inspiration from the 2010 Edinburgh Declaration¹.

Once the mandate and legal foundation of the Focal Point had been established within the Centre, three main priorities for the Focal Point for 2018 were identified: to strengthen internal capacities, begin awareness raising and establish the Focal Point as a relevant business and human rights actor.

Internal trainings on business and human rights were delivered to almost half of the employees working at the Centre in 2018. These internal trainings were supplemented by a study visit where the team implementing the project visited the Danish Institute for Human Rights to increase knowledge and gain practical experience.

The Centre recognised that the 'brand' of a traditional human rights institution would not

¹ OHCHR (2010), The Edinburgh Declaration. International Co-ordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.

https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/AboutUs/NHRI/Edinburgh_Declaration_en.pdf

necessarily appeal to businesses, so opted for a completely new graphic identity, website, and an easy to use acronym as the Focal Point to attract various stakeholders, including businesses.² The self-standing website is a space dedicated to business and human rights hosts an online knowledge platform in Slovakian providing useful information in a user-friendly format.

INTRODUCING THE FOCAL POINT TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS AND TO THE WIDER PUBLIC

The Focal Point was officially launched on 18 September 2018 at a business breakfast focused on responsible and effective employment of foreign workers. The American Chamber of Commerce supported this launch and has supported the Focal Point in engaging businesses, using business language, tailoring educational events for a business audience, as well as highlighting current concerns for large and medium sized enterprises in Slovakia.

After the launch, the Focal Point was showcased through an online campaign. The campaign included official press releases, posts on the Centre's social media and leaflets with the Focal's Point basic information. Moreover, the Focal Point was highlighted at the Equinet Seminar on the discrimination of youth in Ljubljana, at the conference of equality ombudspersons for persons with disabilities in Vienna, and at the 2018 LGBTI Business Forum in Bratislava.

Furthermore, the Centre partnered with the Georgian Defender of Rights to deliver a workshop on the relationship between corporate social responsibility and the concept of business and human rights at the European Agency for Fundamental Rights' annual meeting in 2018.

To help establish the Focal Point as a relevant business and human rights actor, guidance on business and human rights in Slovakian and relevant to Slovakia was developed as there was little available at that time. This guidance took form as an 'Introduction to Business and Human Rights', alongside a translation of the United National Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) and the Edinburgh Declaration.



Photo: Slovak Centre for Human Rights

BUILDING ON THE PROJECT AND FUTURE PLANS

The Centre's work on business and human rights, including establishing the Focal Point, was supported by the Danish Institute for Human Rights and the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI), which helped the Centre position itself in the business and human rights community. In July 2018, the Centre joined the ENNHRI working group on business and human rights.

² Slovak National Centre for Human Rights 'media (n.d.), <https://www.nakom.sk/media>

The Centre has signed the Slovak diversity charter³ and is currently designing new projects on business and human rights. The implementation of the UNGPs was included within the Centre's submission to the third cycle of Universal Periodic Review of Slovakia.⁴ Moreover, the topic of business and human rights was included in the annual reporting of the observance of human rights in Slovakia carried out by the Centre. Moving forward, the Centre would like to be an active member of the ENNHRI working group on business and human rights, continue developing Focal Point's online knowledge platform and organise specific events for businesses as well as for relevant stakeholders and experts.

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³ European Commission (2017), Slovak Diversity Charter. https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/tackling-discrimination/diversity-management/diversity-charters-eu-country/slovak-diversity-charter_en

⁴ Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (2018), Individual Submission of the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights. snslp.sk/CCMS/files/Submission_of_Slovak_National_Centre_for_Human_Rights_UPR.pdf.