

Business and Human Rights

HELP

Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals
Council of Europe



Business and Human Rights

HELP ONLINE COURSE

Duration: 6 hours

Available for free on the CoE
HELP e-learning platform

Statement of
Accomplishment

START COURSE 

Council of Europe
Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) Programme | 2025



Background

Companies have, especially where they operate at the global level as multinational enterprises, become increasingly powerful and have the ability to severely **impact** peoples' lives and the environments in which they operate. While those companies generally bring **benefits to society** in the form of tax revenues and investment, employment opportunities, and technological advancement; the operations, actions and influence of private companies can also have a **detrimental effect** on the rights of their employees and the wider community.

The question of **respect** for human rights and **accountability** for violations by companies has been the subject of increasing debate at both international and national levels. Whilst the **primary duty** to ensure the protection of human rights lies with states, which are expected to take concrete actions (positive obligations), companies are increasingly becoming aware of their **own responsibility** in this field.

A number of important **legal and policy developments** have been adopted at the national, European Union (EU) and international level, and companies are increasingly seeking to develop **practices and processes** to align the growing standards and expectations.

This free [HELP online course](#) addresses the **legal frameworks, methodologies, and practical actions** on how states, corporate actors and legal professionals can **prevent, mitigate, and remedy** potential or actual **corporate related human rights abuses**.

This HELP course provides an overview of Business and Human Rights, focusing on the **state's duties to protect and respect** human rights in the context of corporate actions, as well as on the corporate responsibility to respect these rights by providing practical guidance on how companies can conduct **human rights due diligence**; and offers an in-depth look at the **provision of remedy**. The course also covers **recent EU regulatory developments** shaping this field.

The topics covered are explored in a practical way, using presentations, interactive screens, knowledge tests and reflective exercises.

The course was initially developed in 2021 and updated in 2025

About the course

The course was first time published in 2021. It was developed under the Project "*Online Platform for Business and Human Rights*", implemented by the HELP programme in cooperation with the [Council of Europe Steering Committee for Human Rights \(CDDH\)](#), funded by the Dutch and German Authorities.

The update of the course in 2025 was done in the framework of the *Human Rights and Environmentally Responsible Business Practices* [project](#) funded by the Human Rights Trust Fund.

Target audience

This free on-line course is primarily addressed to **legal professionals** (judges, prosecutors, lawyers or court staff). It can also be used by other public authorities, including national human rights institutions, ombudspersons, mediators, as well as civil society organisations, academics, and university students. Additionally, it is addressed to legal and other professionals working in the **private sector**. The course does not require any previous knowledge in the topic.

Course outline

The course consists of **6 substantive modules**:

0	Introduction (10 minutes) Welcome message, navigation instructions, course authors and course target group
1	Overview of Business and Human Rights (30 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources of human rights • What does Business and human rights mean in practice?
2	Preventing harm – the state's duty to protect (45 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation: the state duty to protect • Practical ways states can meet their duty to protect • The state as a commercial actor • Policy coherence
3	The corporate responsibility to respect (1.15 hours) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the corporate responsibility to respect human rights? • How can a company meet its responsibility to respect human rights? – Policy commitment • How can a company meet its responsibility to respect human rights? – Due Diligence • How can a company meet its responsibility to respect human rights? – Remedy
4	Defending rights and remedying harm (2 hours) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of remedy in human rights law • What is an effective remedy? • Mechanisms for defending rights and seeking remedy: an overview • Defending rights and seeking remedies through the courts • Non-judicial grievance mechanisms

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical perspectives on remedy • The wider legal environment for remedy
5	Regulatory developments in the EU (1 hour) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent developments in the EU: an overview • Landmark EU regimes • The Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive in focus • The broader legal and policy context
6	Business and human rights in the digital environment (2 hours) - <i>will be available in 2026</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach to the impact of digitalisation on human rights • Human rights at stake in the digital economy • Companies in the digital market

How to access the HELP online course

The course can be accessed by visiting the HELP e-learning platform at:
<http://help.elearning.ext.coe.int/>

First you need to open a HELP account if you have not yet done so (2 minutes).
Then you can follow this link to directly access the online course:
<http://help.elearning.ext.coe.int/course/view.php?id=1760>