



## **ANNUAL REPORT**

*Coordinating Committee: Prof. Belen Olmos Giupponi (Middlesex University London), Dr. Emanuela Orlando (University of Sussex), Nina M. Hart (King's College London) and Prof. Cristina Elena Popa Tache (Romanian Academy).*

The Interest Group on Business and Human Rights (IG BHR) is pleased to submit this report to our members and stakeholders. The membership of the IG BHR counts 427 members at the time of writing this Report.

### **1. Activities during 2024**

In 2024, we worked on the organisation of the annual workshop of the IG, which took place in Vilnius on the 4th of September 2024 in occasion of the 19th Annual Conference of the European Society of International Law. The workshop was delivered in hybrid format and was well attended both in person and online. In line with the theme of the ESIL Annual Conference, which this year focussed on the question 'Technological Change and International Law', the theme of the workshop was 'New frontiers of International Business and Human Rights Law in the face of Technological Innovations'. In that framework, the workshop featured several interesting presentations which explored the question of technological changes in international business and human rights law through different perspectives: due diligence, responsibility or consumer protection in technology environment and human rights.

We would like to take this occasion to thank again the participants and particularly our speakers: *Alessandra De Tommaso (Middlesex University, London School of Law) ; Antoine Duval and Klaas Eller (Asser Institute and University of Amsterdam); Maciej Gajos (University of Wroclaw); Zuzanna Choińska (University of Warsaw); Esmeralda Columbo (Smartenergy Italy Srl); Sissy Katsoni (Rüth-Universität Bochum); Iris Benöhr (Southampton Law School) and Elise Vălcu (National University of Science and Technology' Politehnica' Bucharest).*

At the same time, we discussed new activities and updated our group Blog: igbusinessandhumanrights – ESIL International Business and Human Rights Interest Group webpage: <https://igbusinessandhumanrights.wordpress.com/2024/08/29/workshop-at-esil-annual-conference/>

Following the workshop held in September 2024, the ESIL Interest Group on International Business and Human Rights (IG BHR) focused on several strategic priorities throughout the remainder of the year.

### **2. Activities during 2025**

### ***2.1. Planned Participation in the 2025 ESIL Annual Conference and Organization of the IG BHR Annual Workshop***

As part of the 20th Annual Conference of the European Society of International Law (ESIL), which will take place in Berlin, Germany, on 10–13 September 2025, under the overarching theme “Reconstructing International Law”, the Interest Group on International Business and Human Rights will hold its annual workshop entitled: “Reconstructing International Law: Structural Shifts Under the UN Binding Treaty on Business and Human Rights”.

Scheduled for 11 September 2025, the workshop will bring together scholars, practitioners, and civil society actors to explore the structural implications of the forthcoming UN Binding Treaty on Business and Human Rights. Discussions will focus on the normative reconstruction of international economic law as well as institutional and actor-driven transformations emerging from the global regulation of multinational corporations.

The event will form part of the official ESIL Interest Group Workshop series and will reflect the group’s ongoing commitment to fostering critical, transdisciplinary, and justice-oriented approaches to the field of business and human rights.

### ***2.2. Webinar Series on Economic Sanctions and Human Rights (February–March 2025)***

Between February and March 2025, the ESIL Interest Group on International Business and Human Rights successfully convened a three-part webinar series entitled "Economic Sanctions and Human Rights". The series, coordinated by Nina Hart, but featuring participation also of other members of the IG BHR coordinating committee, brought together leading scholars, legal practitioners, and policy experts from Europe and North America to address legal and human rights-related challenges arising from the growing use and evolution of economic sanctions by key global actors, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union.

Each session focused on a distinct phase in the "life cycle" of economic sanctions, fostering informed dialogue across sectors and disciplines.

The first webinar on „Sanctions Designations and Human Rights – Current and Emerging Issues” was held on 20 February 2025, and addressed the evolving practice of sanctions designations, including restrictions targeting digital economy actors and family members of sanctioned individuals, particularly in the context of Russia-related sanctions. It also examined post-Brexit developments in the UK's independent sanctions regime. The discussion focused on the human rights implications of such designations and the legal and policy challenges they generate. Participants included Ms. Nina M. Hart (King’s College London) as moderator, and Prof. Anupam Chander (Georgetown University Law Center), Ms. Diana Friling (Friling Law PLLC), Mr. Michael O’Kane (Peters & Peters LLP), and Prof. Takis Tridimas (Université du Luxembourg) as speakers.

The second webinar on „Sanctions Compliance, Enforcement, and Human Rights’ was held on 6 March 2025. It examined the challenges faced by regulators and industry in complying with and enforcing sanctions regimes, with a focus on recent developments that raise significant human rights concerns. Topics included the legal effects of novel sanctions frameworks, the emergence of the UN humanitarian exemption, and shifts in enforcement policies across jurisdictions. Moderators for this seminar were Ms. Nina M. Hart (King’s College London), Dr. Belen Olmos Giupponi, and Dr. Emanuela Orlando. Speakers included, Dr. Michael Albrecht vom Kolke (Skadden LLP), Ms. Ginger T. Faulk (Eversheds Sutherland LLP), Mr. Bruno Lebrun (Janson LLP), and Prof. Jacob Öberg (University of Southern Denmark & Örebro University).

The third and final seminar – "Sanctions, Arbitration, and Human Rights” held on the 20 March 2025 explored the intersections between economic sanctions and international arbitration, addressing their procedural and substantive implications for human rights. Experts discussed legal claims,

jurisdictional barriers, institutional responses, and the implications for access to justice within arbitration proceedings. Moderator was Dr. Cristina Elena Popa Tache (International Institute for the Analysis of Legal and Administrative Mutations). Speakers included Dr. Crina Baltag (Stockholm University), Dr. Joel Dahlquist (Arnold & Porter LLP), Ms. Damroka Kościelak (Office of the General Counsel to the Republic of Poland), and Prof. Jacomijn van Harsolte-van Hof (Fountain Court Chambers & Universiteit Leiden)

All in all, this webinar series significantly contributed to the Group's objectives by addressing cutting-edge legal debates and promoting interdisciplinary engagement on the human rights dimensions of economic sanctions.

### ***2.3. Workshop on Business, Human Rights, and Climate Change Litigation***

This half-day online workshop was held on 26 June 2025. This event supported by ESIL, which was organised by Prof. Belen Olmos Giupponi-Middlesex University London, and Prof Dirk Hanschel from Halle-Wittenberg University in Germany, brought together leading academics and practitioners to critically explore emerging intersections between corporate accountability, climate justice, and transnational litigation strategies.

Structured into four thematic panels, the workshop fostered vibrant discussions around legal innovation, regional and global litigation trends, and normative shifts in the enforcement of corporate sustainability obligations.

The first Panel - Reimagining Corporate Accountability in the Climate Crisis – was chaired by Dr Emanuela Orlando (University of Sussex), and featured: Prof. Dr. Fabrizio Marrella (University of Ca' Foscari-Venice) presenting on transnational law and the BHR movement; Prof. Dr. Anne Mittwoch (Halle-Wittenberg University) on the EU Omnibus proposal and its transformative legal effects; and Dr. Alessandra De Tommaso (Middlesex University London) on emerging trends in climate change litigation.

Panel II, on Climate Litigation in Motion – Global Trends and Strategic Cases, was chaired by Prof. Belen Olmos Giupponi (Middlesex University London), with contributions from: Sol Meckievi (Cambridge/Oxford) on climate justice and the *Lliuya v. RWE* case; Dr. Ian Higham (LSE) on current trends in global climate litigation; Cristian Herrera Ligorria (UWE/Columbia University) on transnational litigation linking the Global South and North.

The third panel - Strengthening Enforcement: Bridging Norms and Accountability Mechanisms - chaired by Prof. Dr. Dirk Hanschel (University of Halle-Wittenberg), featured presentations by Prof. Dr. Markus Krajewski (University of Erlangen) on corporate duties under the EU CSDDD; Dr. Jane Rooney (Durham) & Dr. Lee McConnell (Bristol) on human rights, security, and the extractive industry; and Prof. Dr. Peter Tobias Stoll (University of Göttingen) on FTAs as tools for enforcing human rights and climate obligations.

Finally, Panel IV, on Legal Futures – New Frontiers and Climate Justice, chaired by Nina Hart (King's College London), hosted interventions from Dr. Cristina Elena Popa Tache (Romanian Academy) on the militarisation of climate change in international law and Ayushi Kalyan (FIAN International) on civil society engagement and prospects for a binding treaty on BHR.

The workshop concluded with a final reflection session, highlighting the need for stronger legal frameworks, intersectional analysis, and inclusive enforcement mechanisms in the evolving field of climate change and business-related human rights litigation.

For the year 2026, we aim to continue and strengthen the process of expanding academic and scientific projects by organising thematic international events, engaging actively in ESIL conferences, and fostering multi- and interdisciplinary dialogue in the fields of business, human

rights, and international law. We will also intensify collaborations with other interest groups and partner institutions, encourage members' contributions through open calls for publications, and support the involvement of early-career researchers in editorial and applied research activities, while maintaining a learning dynamic grounded in the experience of senior scholars. Our objective is to further develop the Group into an increasingly visible and relevant platform within European and international academic debates on the identification and accountability of economic actors in the field of human rights.

### ***Conclusion***

Both 2024 and 2025 marked an important stage in the consolidation of the activities of the Interest Group on Business and Human Rights, by diversifying the topics addressed, expanding international collaborations and stimulating the involvement of members in research and legal debate.

By organizing relevant academic events, supporting individual initiatives and promoting interdisciplinary dialogue, the Group reaffirmed its commitment to the critical analysis and normative development of international law in the field of business and human rights.

The visibility of the IG BHR was enhanced during the year through the use of social media, including Twitter/X and LinkedIn where news and events were regularly posted. We also maintained and updated the Group's blog, which remains open to members' contributions and suggestions.

We look forward to the second half of 2025 & 2026, continuing to actively support our members' contributions, encourage innovative thinking, and strengthen the Group's presence within the ESIL network and the international legal space.

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