

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **A robust human rights due diligence is an essential factor for companies to get through the pandemic**

#### ***MBA students analyze companies' business resilience as part of the ESCP Company Consultancy Projects with Löning-Human Rights & Responsible Business***

**Berlin, 26.08.2020.** A working paper that was conducted by MBA students from the [ESCP Business School](#) in Berlin for [Löning-Human Rights & Responsible Business](#) identifies trends in the reactions of businesses to cope with COVID-19 and summarizes solutions that contributed to positive continuity of business activities. It looks into key factors that help improve companies' business resilience. The working paper shows that a robust human rights due diligence is an essential factor for getting through the pandemic and to improve business resilience in the long-term.

The COVID-19 outbreak has been accompanied by economic uncertainty, factory shutdowns as disruption ripples back up supply chains, and fears for the protection of workers. While many methods are currently being deployed whose effectiveness has yet to be seen, there are certain measures an organization can adopt early in order to prepare and be resilient to external shocks and crises.

#### **Key facts of the working paper**

The research categorizes (re-)actions of businesses during the COVID-19 outbreak into five broad categories:

- transparency: communication with stakeholders,
- operational effectiveness: allows quick reactions,
- collaboration: with local organizations to support and strengthen the communities in which they operate,
- digital roadmap: allows for it to react more quickly and efficiently to evolving consumer and employee needs, as well as across the supply chain,
- ensuring health & safety of workers and employees.

Depending on the efforts made in these categories the analyzed companies were able to cope with the current situation more or less successful. These categories form the building blocks of the business-ability to continuity during a crisis. The interviews and a survey of 26 different organizations, spanning 7 industries, shows that there is a clear correlation between these three factors and successful business continuity throughout this pandemic and beyond.

#### **CSR Strategy a driver for success**

While it is still early to draw a final conclusion, there is already a clear trend in the companies that have survived the pandemic with relative ease: A correlation can be noted between companies that have a sustainability-driven culture and how prepared they were to deal with this disruptive crisis. The research suggests there could be a strong link between the "stakeholder mindset" employed by sustainability-driven companies and their successful reactions. This

correlation also may exist due to the “long-term” thinking that companies with embedded CSR strategies tend to adopt.

[Get the full working paper here.](#)

“I very much appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with students from the ESCP. The Company Consultancy Projects are a great way to exchange perspectives and learn from each other. This has been the second time we participated in a student consulting project with the ESCP Berlin. The results gave us meaningful insights and helps us to adapt our services to our clients’ needs. This research shows the importance of human rights due diligence, especially in times of crisis”, says [Markus Löning](#), CEO and Senior Strategy Advisor, Löning Human Rights & Responsible Business.

Prof. Dr. Andreas Kaplan, the business school’s rector, furthermore points out that: “The Company Consultancy Projects are an essential element of ESCP’s MBA curriculum and enable students to put into practice the concepts acquired in the classroom. Together in a group of 5-6 team members coming from diverse nationalities as well as professional and educational backgrounds, students work on real consulting projects with real companies. We are more than happy to have a recurring client and partner with Löning-Human Rights & Responsible Business having given our students the chance to work on such a timely and important question.”

Likewise, the MBA students have a positive opinion about the project: “While conducting surveys and research during a global lockdown seemed initially daunting, we were pleased to see that despite the pandemic companies and individuals were still eager and available to help. Collaborating with Löning Human Rights & Responsible Business with the support of ESCP during this timely and relevant project was not only a pleasure, but was both informative and interesting. We were thrilled to be able to be part of such a project and to help organizations with our research and results”, says Gabrielle Kaufman, MBA student.

#### **About the Company Consultancy Projects**

The [Company Consultancy Projects](#) offered by ESCP Business School Berlin are an opportunity to receive new solutions by advanced graduate students. Companies benefit from a lively exchange with students, their structured research approach, creativity and fresh mindset. A Company Consultancy Project offers a platform to work content-wise with students as well as to assess potential employees based on their performance.

#### **About the ESCP Business School**

[ESCP Business School](#) was founded in 1819. The school has chosen to teach responsible leadership, open to the world and based on European multiculturalism. The campuses in Berlin, London, Madrid, Paris, Turin and Warsaw are the stepping stones that allow students to experience this European approach to management. Several generations of entrepreneurs and managers were thus trained in the firm belief that the business world may feed society in a positive way. This conviction and our values: excellence, singularity, creativity, and plurality, daily guide our mission and build up our pedagogical vision. Every year, ESCP welcomes 6000 students and 5000 managers from 120 different nationalities. Its strength lies in its many business training programs, both general and specialized: Bachelor, Master, MBA, Executive MBA, PhD and executive education, all of which include a multi-campus experience.

### **About Löning**

[Löning – Human Rights and Responsible Business](#) is an international management consultancy for business and human rights, founded by the former commissioner for Human Rights of the German government, Markus Löning. We help our business and non-profit clients integrate the respect of human rights into their daily operations and global supply chains, by establishing effective human rights due diligence processes. We use our experiences and expertise from the consultancy work in our publications and think tank work to enhance the visibility of human rights challenges in business contexts. For more information visit [www.loening-berlin.de](http://www.loening-berlin.de)

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