

RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS CONDUCT AND UKRAINE'S EU ACCESSION: FROM POLICY TO SECTORAL PRACTICE

Online session | 21 September 2026 | 14:00–16:30 Kyiv time | Zoom
Working languages: Ukrainian and English with simultaneous interpretation

Rationale

Ukraine's reconstruction is taking place alongside a profound transformation of the country's economic and regulatory environment driven by its accession to the European Union. For Ukrainian businesses, responsible business conduct (RBC) is therefore becoming more than a voluntary sustainability agenda. It is increasingly relevant to competitiveness, access to European markets and value chains, investment and financing, public procurement, and the expectations of international business partners.

At the same time, the European framework on corporate sustainability and human rights and environmental due diligence continues to evolve. For Ukrainian companies and policymakers, understanding these developments requires looking beyond the formal scope of individual EU legal instruments. Ukrainian companies may encounter due diligence expectations through relationships with European customers, investors, banks, lead contractors and other business partners even before such requirements apply directly under Ukrainian law.

Ukraine is also developing its own architecture for responsible business conduct. This includes work on a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights / Responsible Business Conduct, discussion of a national framework for mandatory Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence (mHREDD), implementation of OECD standards, and the development of practical guidance for companies and other actors involved in Ukraine's recovery.

Russia's war against Ukraine creates an additional layer of responsibility. Businesses operating in or connected to Ukraine need to assess not only traditional business, human rights and environmental risks, but also risks associated with armed conflict, occupation and de-occupation, sanctions, changing ownership and control of assets, displacement, worker safety, impacts on vulnerable groups and conflict-affected communities. This makes conflict-sensitive and heightened human rights due diligence particularly important in the Ukrainian context.

The session will bring these elements together within one coherent framework. It will begin with the broader policy and regulatory context—Ukraine's European integration, developments in the EU, the National Action Plan and emerging mHREDD legislation—and then move from policy to implementation. A central part of the session will be the presentation of six sectoral guidelines on responsible business conduct covering extractive industries, agriculture, information and communication technologies, critical minerals, transport and logistics, and construction and infrastructure.

The guidelines translate international principles into practical sector-specific risks, red flags and recommended actions. Rather than presenting them as six separate publications, the session will demonstrate how they form part of a common RBC architecture and can help Ukrainian companies, investors, policymakers and other stakeholders prepare for the changing expectations associated with EU integration and responsible recovery.

Guiding question: What should Ukrainian companies, policymakers, investors and other actors start doing differently today to prepare for the responsible business environment in which Ukraine will increasingly operate?

Objectives

The session will explain the relationship between EU accession and RBC; clarify current European developments in business and human rights regulation; discuss the role of Ukraine's National Action Plan and emerging mHREDD framework; introduce conflict-sensitive and heightened due diligence; and demonstrate how these principles can be translated into practical action through six sectoral guidelines.

This session is organised with the support of the Swedish Institute as part of the project “Responsible Business Conduct (RBC) in the Recovery of Ukraine”, implemented jointly by Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University, the Ministry of Economy and Environment of Ukraine, the Social Action Centre and Swedwatch.

PROGRAMME

Time	Session / Speaker
14:00–14:05	Welcome and introduction <i>Moderator — Olena Uvarova, Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University / UNDP</i> Opening, objectives and framing: from EU integration and international standards to Ukrainian policy, legislation and sectoral implementation.
14:05–14:10	Responsible Business Conduct in the Context of Ukraine's European Integration and Recovery <i>Maryna Kupchuk, Ministry of Economy and Environment of Ukraine</i> RBC in Ukraine's economic transformation, EU integration and reconstruction; links between OECD standards, the NAP, mHREDD and practical support for Ukrainian business.
14:10–14:30	From Voluntary Standards to Mandatory Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence <i>Prof. Claire Bright, NOVA School of Law / NOVA Centre on Business, Human Rights and the Environment, Portugal</i> What mHREDD means in practice; European lessons; proportionality for SMEs; value-chain responsibility; stakeholder engagement; remedy; avoiding tick-box compliance.
14:30–14:45	Implementation of the International Business and Human Rights Framework through the National Action Plan <i>Olena Uvarova, Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University / UNDP</i> Purpose of the NAP; translating the UN Guiding Principles into government policy; institutional coordination, stakeholder participation and links with future legislation.
14:45–15:05	European Regulation on Business and Human Rights: What Has Changed and What Does It Mean for Ukraine? <i>Prof. Nadia Bernaz, Wageningen University & Research, the Netherlands</i> EU business and human rights regulation, the evolving CSDDD framework, links to UNGPs and OECD standards, and implications for Ukrainian companies in European value chains.
15:05-15:15	Q&A

15:15–15:25	Why the Ukrainian Context Requires Conflict-Sensitive and Heightened Human Rights Due Diligence <i>Kateryna Buriakovska, Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University / FAU Center for Human Rights Erlangen-Nürnberg</i> How due diligence changes in conflict-affected settings; occupation, sanctions, workers, vulnerable groups, communities and the impact of business decisions on conflict dynamics.
15:25–15:40	From General Principles to Sectoral Practice <i>Jessica Johansson, Swedwatch</i> Why general standards need sector-specific tools; methodology behind the six guidelines; how companies, investors, government, trade unions and civil society can use them.
15:40–16:00	Six Sectoral Guidelines: From Risk Identification to Practical Action <i>Irene Fedorovych, Social Action Centre</i> Extractive industries; agriculture; ICT; critical minerals; transport and logistics; construction and infrastructure.
16:00-16.10	Advocacy and Lobbying as Tools for Responsible Business Conduct Under UN and OECD Standards <i>Iryna Shapovalova, Attorney, Managing Partner at Iryna Shapovalova Law Firm, lobbyist, founder of the Lobbyists' Office, accredited with the EU Transparency Register</i>
16.10-16.20	Anti-Corruption Compliance as a Tool for Preventing Corruption in the Private Sector: Challenges and Prospects for Legal Framework <i>Nataliia Smetanina, PhD, Associate Professor, Associate Professor in the Department of Criminal Law Policy, Head of the Authorized Unit for the Prevention and Detection of Corruption, Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University, participant in the international project "ACT – Addressing Corruption Together" (Sweden, Moldova, Ukraine)</i>
16:20–16:30	Q&A