

Politics and regulation

Growing attention to human rights issues

The National Research University Higher School of Economics Institute for Statistical Studies and Economics of Knowledge (HSE ISSEK) presents the results of a human capital trends study. The study methodology included big data mining using the HSE ISSEK-developed **iFORA system**, expert sessions, and a Delphi survey of more than 400 leading international and Russian scientists specialising in human capital.

The project is being implemented by the World-Class Human Capital Multidisciplinary Research Centre and the UNESCO Futures Studies Chair (UNESCO Futures Literacy Chairs network). A complete list of trends is available at the unique open-access database at https://ncmu.hse.ru/chelpoten_trends.

The Trend's Structure

- **Development of public control over the observance of human rights**

Almost all the tasks necessary to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals directly relate to the protection of human rights. These include providing equal access to vocational and higher education, ensuring decent working conditions, and introducing social protection systems and other supportive measures at the state level.

Positive changes have occurred in the field of human rights protection in recent decades, with increased cooperation between governments, international organizations, and commercial and non-profit entities. Today, public and private organizations take active steps to protect human rights, but not all efforts are equally effective. For example, while more than 90% of companies that join the UN Global Compact, such as Microsoft, Sumitomo, LG, Xiaomi, and Rosatom State Corporation, formulate principles for their human rights policies and develop measures to implement them, less than 20% conduct comprehensive evaluations of the effectiveness of those measures.

The lack of transparency in supply chains and related issues, such as the use of child labor, remain one of the most pressing global challenges. The level of information disclosure regarding the management and minimization

- **Increasing business responsibility regarding the observance of human rights**

of key risks, such as forced labor, is still low. For example, in Germany, in 2021, a law was enacted to increase business responsibility at all stages of value creation by imposing fines on companies that have contractors (including foreign companies) that violate human rights or environmental standards.

States are making more and more efforts to improve the effectiveness of regulatory mechanisms. They are making provisions that currently apply to businesses as recommendations mandatory. For example, draft laws in Germany, Denmark, Switzerland, Norway, Canada, Finland, and Austria are being developed to strengthen companies' responsibility in human rights protection and identify risks in supply chains. These laws also provide measures to prevent violations.

At the current stage of rapid automation of production processes, there has been a significant shift in the division of labour between humans and machines. This has led to the need for regulating the interaction between humans and technology, as well as ensuring the human right to work and job security. The issue of establishing a legal framework for human-robot communication has been raised in the United States, Japan, South Korea, China, and EU countries.

- **The creation of a specific legal framework for human-robot interaction**

Key Estimates

155 of the 169

targets for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals are directly related to the protection of human rights

The Trend's Characteristics



Impact on human capital¹

1

2

3



Weak signal²

The increasing number of documents related to the protection of human rights at the international, national, and regional levels



Strongest manifestation period

2026–2030



Wild card³

Granting robots rights



Effect of COVID-19 pandemic

Strengthened the trend



Consequences of the wild card event actually taking place

Replacing people with robots in various sectors of the economy



Presence in Russia

Below the world level

¹ 1 = weak, 2 = medium, 3 = strong.

² Weak signals are insignificant (rarely mentioned or discussed) events which indicate the trend may radically change in the future.

³ "Wild cards" are difficult-to-predict events which, if they do happen, can significantly affect the trend.

Drivers and Barriers



Drivers

- Strengthening human-centeredness in the economy
- Lack of transparency in value chains
- Increased attention from human rights defenders and media to human rights compliance issues
- Persistence of human rights violations in the labour sector, including the use of child and forced labour
- Impact of companies, particularly multinational corporations, on socio-economic processes in the regions where they operate
- Development of interactions between people and technology
- Negative socio-economic consequences of technology proliferation



Barriers

- Declarative nature of the policy pursued by companies
- Lack of norms and standards that are mandatory for compliance, penalties

Trend Effects



Opportunities

- Increased transparency in value chains
- Elimination of child and forced labor
- Increased involvement of companies in local community development
- Increased attention to ensuring safety in production



Threats

- Maintaining the advisory nature of the rules on monitoring value chains for human rights violations