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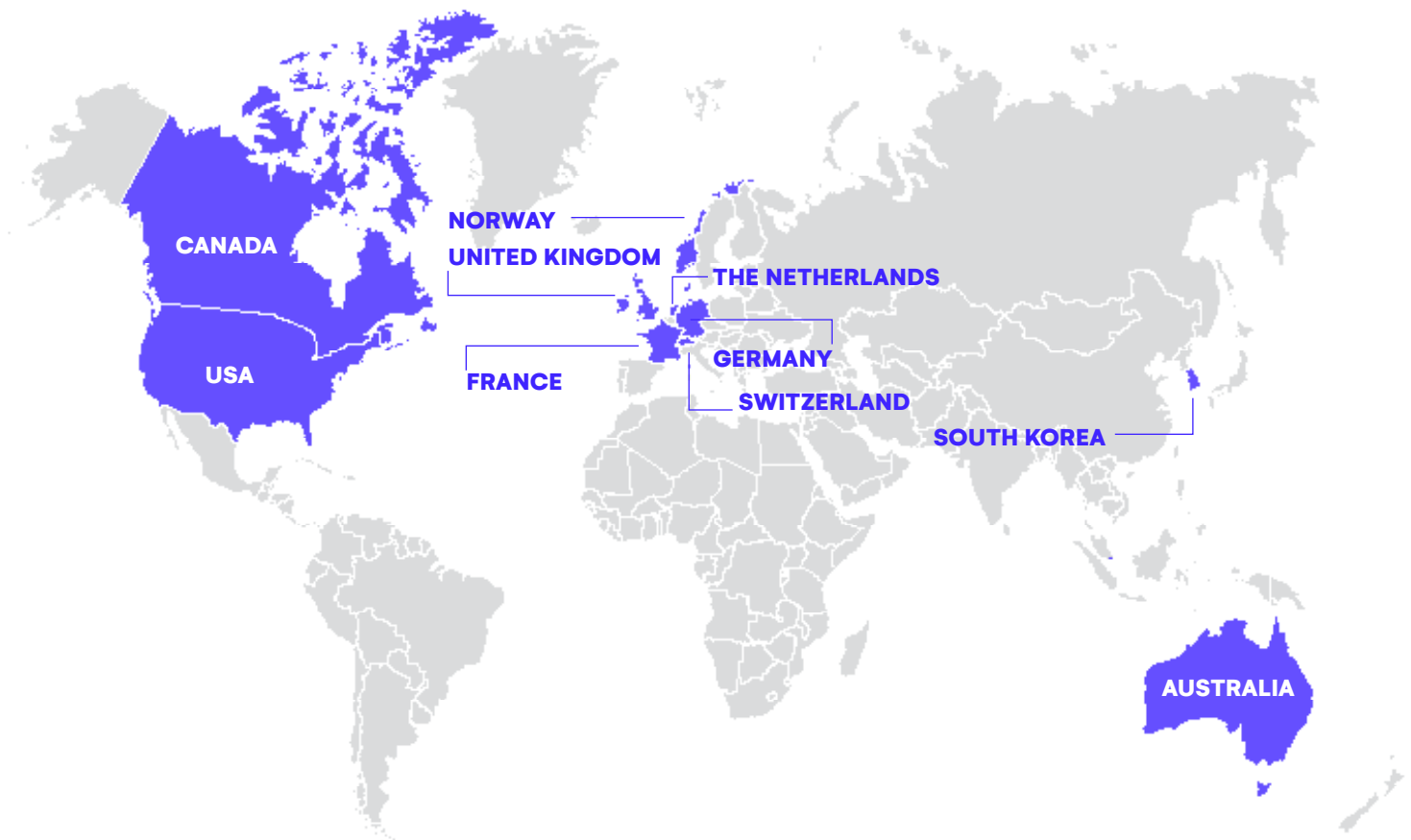
2026 GLOBAL HIRING GUIDE: ESG, SUSTAINABILITY & HUMAN RIGHTS

Salary data and hiring considerations, country by country



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01.

INTRODUCTION:

ESG IN A MORE COMPLEX WORLD

As we head through 2026, things are changing once again in the ESG world.

ESG, sustainability and human rights have entered a more nuanced and demanding phase. While the intensity of public debate has shifted over the past two years, regulatory expectations have become more targeted, more technical and, in many jurisdictions, more enforceable.

Rather than focusing on ambition alone, organisations are now being judged on implementation, data integrity and credibility. Boards are increasingly accountable for how ESG risks are identified, managed and reported, particularly across supply chains, climate exposure and labour standards.

This guide provides a global overview of the ESG, sustainability and human rights hiring market in 2026. It combines market insight, regional trends and country-specific hiring considerations, supporting organisations that are building or refining ESG capability across geographies

While salary benchmarking remains an important reference point, the reality of ESG hiring in 2026 is that demand for experienced practitioners continues to exceed supply, particularly for professionals who can move beyond policy design and deliver operational change.

THE GLOBAL ESG LANDSCAPE

Regulation: less noise, more scrutiny

Since the volatility of 2024–2025, regulatory frameworks are settling into a clearer, albeit more selective, shape. The EU's recalibration of CSRD and CSDDD thresholds has reduced immediate pressure on smaller organisations, but for large and internationally exposed businesses, compliance expectations remain high.

Crucially, regulators are now placing increased emphasis on quality over volume: less duplication, more consistency, and greater assurance over data and processes. This has materially changed the type of ESG talent organisations are seeking.

ESG moves from reputation to risk management

Today, ESG is increasingly treated as a component of enterprise risk rather than a standalone function. Climate risk, human rights due diligence and supply chain transparency are now embedded within broader governance, risk and compliance frameworks.

As a result, ESG hiring has shifted decisively towards professionals with:

- Operational and commercial experience
- Strong regulatory interpretation skills
- The ability to work cross-functionally with legal, risk, procurement and audit

Human rights and supply chain due diligence remain core drivers

Despite political shifts in some jurisdictions, mandatory due diligence continues to expand globally. European legislation remains the primary catalyst, but its extraterritorial reach is influencing hiring decisions well beyond the EU.

Human rights roles are no longer limited to specialist NGOs or policy teams. Organisations are increasingly hiring corporate-facing professionals who can implement due diligence frameworks at scale and withstand regulatory and reputational scrutiny.

Implications for the ESG talent market

Despite headlines suggesting a slowdown in ESG investment, hiring demand remains robust. The difference in 2026 is focus.

Organisations are prioritising:

- Fewer, more senior or more technically capable hires
- Strong implementation experience
- Individuals who can operate under regulatory pressure

At the same time, the ESG talent pool remains relatively small and highly international. Many employers continue to hire from adjacent disciplines – including legal, risk, compliance, internal audit and consulting – and invest in training and upskilling.

Leonid has supported numerous organisations in taking this approach successfully, particularly where traditional ESG hiring pools are exhausted.



02.

COUNTRY GUIDES

In the following section, you will find an overview of key drivers and trends in the ESG, Sustainability and Human Rights space on a country-by-country basis.

Please note that this information is correct at the time of going to print, but this is a rapidly evolving area of business and things may quickly change!

In addition to an overview of the sector, we also provide a salary guide and some advice on local hiring considerations.

The salaries are a guide only and there are always variations in bonuses, benefits and weighting according to location and industry vertical. For example, financial services and life sciences typically pay 5 – 10% more than the average.

We have chosen to highlight a selection of countries where we are currently seeing a high level of ESG activity and high demand for skills. However, **Leonid does work globally and if you are seeking information on a country not covered here, we would be more than happy to provide a tailored overview, on request.**





USA: ESG OVERVIEW

In 2026, the US ESG landscape remains decentralised, shaped by a combination of federal constraint and increasingly assertive state level regulation. While there is still no comprehensive federal ESG or human rights due diligence regime, states have continued to advance their own disclosure, climate and supply chain requirements. California remains the most influential, with climate disclosure laws now firmly embedded into corporate reporting and carrying extraterritorial impact for companies operating in or servicing the state.

At a federal level, ESG enforcement has shifted away from expansive rule making towards selective oversight, placing greater responsibility on boards rather than shareholders. As a result, ESG obligations are being addressed more through enterprise risk management and internal governance than standalone sustainability initiatives.

For US based multinationals, the primary driver of ESG investment in 2026 remains **European regulation**, particularly CSRD and CSDDD. This has sustained demand for ESG, reporting and human rights expertise, especially where organisations are seeking to align US operations with EU regulatory expectations.

USA

With a GDP of more than USD\$27 trillion, the United States is a leader in several key industries, including technology, oil and gas and renewable energy. The country has one of the largest tech markets in the world, with three cities ranking in the top 10 for global fintech, including San Francisco (#1), New York (#2), Los Angeles (#4).

The United States workforce serves as the backbone of its economy. Employment rates have been steadily rising, with the notable exception of the COVID-19 pandemic which led to the phenomenon coined as the “Great Resignation,” prompting workers to contemplate the trajectory of their lives.

We are now seeing a re-stabilisation of the employment market, and the Corporate Governance world is no exception.

The US is an exciting place to work and to do business with, but in terms of hiring, it does bring a degree of complexity due to a number of stringent labour laws.

Ease of doing business ranking = 6

CAPITAL	Washington
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	English
POPULATION	340 million
PAYROLL	Varies; usually weekly or bi-weekly
CURRENCY	US Dollars (USD)
VAT	Nil



Hiring Considerations

- Most companies in the U.S. operate on an ‘at-will’ basis. This means that employees can leave their jobs at any time, for any reason. Companies can terminate their employees’ service – with a few exceptions – without giving notice or providing redundancy pay.
- Many companies do give notice as a courtesy, but the law does not require it. Some companies also negotiate severance pay, especially for higher-level executives.
- The practice of at-will employment means signing formal employment contracts is not a common practice in the U.S. Some companies use them, especially for key executives or other important members of a firm. However, contracts are not standard.
- The standard workweek in the U.S. consists of 40 hours — eight hours per day, five days per week. However, variations on this schedule are common.
- There is no legal requirement to give paid holidays; however, on average, US workers will take 10 vacation days per year.

Cultural Considerations

- In the US, business culture places a strong emphasis on equality and non-discrimination. This is reinforced by numerous laws including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, colour, religion, sex, or national origin in any aspect of employment.
- The ‘hustle mentality’ is a prominent aspect of the work culture in the United States. It encompasses a mindset that emphasises relentless effort, ambition, and a constant drive for success. It is deeply ingrained in the American work ethic, with many professionals adopting a “work hard, play hard” approach to their careers.

Despite ongoing political debate at a federal level, ESG and human rights hiring in the US remains resilient in 2026. Much of the demand is now driven by US organisations with European exposure, particularly around supply chain due diligence and ESG reporting alignment. We’re increasingly seeing firms choose between housing regulatory expertise domestically or embedding it closer to EU operations – both approaches remain active.

Adam Bond
Leonid Group

HUMAN RIGHTS

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (USD)
Head of Human Rights (VP)	\$150,000 - \$240,000
Human Rights Specialist / Officer / Manager	\$80,000 - \$120,000

SUSTAINABILITY

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (USD)
Chief Sustainability Officer (EVP/SVP)	\$165,000 - \$280,000
Head of Sustainability / ESG (VP)	\$115,000 - \$185,000
Senior Sustainability / ESG Manager	\$110,000 - \$170,000
Sustainability / ESG Manager	\$85,000 - \$120,000
Sustainability / ESG Officer	\$70,000 - \$110,000
Sustainability / ESG Analyst	\$65,000 - \$100,000

ESG REPORTING

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (USD)
Head of ESG Reporting (VP)	\$120,000 - \$180,000
ESG Reporting Manager	\$90,000 - \$130,000
ESG Reporting Officer	\$70,000 - \$100,000



CANADA: ESG OVERVIEW

Canada's ESG framework has transitioned from predominantly principles based guidance to a more enforceable, regulation driven model. By 2026, climate disclosure requirements for federally regulated financial institutions are embedded, aligning Canadian reporting more closely with international standards such as TCFD and ISSB.

Human rights and supply chain governance have also become materially more prominent. Strengthened import controls and forced labour measures – alongside anticipated supply chain due diligence legislation – have driven significant focus on implementation rather than policy design. As a result, ESG and human rights functions are increasingly being positioned alongside legal, risk and compliance teams.

CANADA

Canada has a robust economic base, low taxes, abundant natural resources, and a stable political climate. These factors create an environment for international businesses to flourish. When it comes to ease of payment for small to medium-sized businesses, Canada has one of the lowest tax burdens among the G7 countries.

Canada's economy is also one of the most resilient in the world, with a GDP of \$2.14 trillion in 2024.

Hiring in Canada has become increasingly popular among foreign companies as the country offers a diverse and highly skilled labour force.

Ease of doing business ranking = 23

CAPITAL	Ottawa
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	English, French
POPULATION	40.1 million
PAYROLL	Bi - weekly
CURRENCY	Canadian Dollars (CAD)
VAT	5%



Hiring Considerations

- Canada is officially a bilingual country, home to both English and French speakers. Fluency in English will be enough to navigate around the vast majority of Canadian cities and provinces.
- Each province in Canada has its own employment standards legislation that outlines minimum requirements for employment relationships. These standards cover areas such as hours of work, overtime pay, vacation entitlement, public holidays and termination notice.

Cultural Considerations

- Canadian workplaces are typically friendly and non-hierarchical compared with other nations, and there is a strong emphasis on harmonious and social environments. Therefore, friendly chatter — or small talk — is very much the norm when meeting Canadian workers.
- Punctuality and good manners are both expected and highly valued.

Canada's shift towards mandatory supply chain and forced labour legislation has materially changed the ESG hiring market. Now, the Canadian landscape increasingly mirrors Europe, with strong demand for professionals who can operationalise due diligence rather than simply advise on policy. This remains one of the most buoyant ESG hiring markets in North America.

Adam Bond
Leonid Group

HUMAN RIGHTS

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (CAD)
Head of Human Rights (VP)	CAD 130,000 – CAD 200,000
Human Rights Specialist / Officer / Manager	CAD 70,000 – CAD 140,000

SUSTAINABILITY

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (CAD)
Chief Sustainability Officer (EVP/SVP)	CAD 180,000 – CAD 280,000
Head of Sustainability / ESG (VP)	CAD 140,000 – CAD 200,000
Senior Sustainability / ESG Manager	CAD 120,000 – CAD 140,000
Sustainability / ESG Manager	CAD 100,000 – CAD 130,000
Sustainability / ESG Officer	CAD 80,000 – CAD 110,000
Sustainability / ESG Analyst	CAD 75,000 – CAD 90,000

ESG REPORTING

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (CAD)
Head of ESG Reporting (VP)	CAD 110,000 – CAD 160,000
ESG Reporting Manager	CAD 80,000 – CAD 120,000
ESG Reporting Officer	CAD 60,000 – CAD 90,000



UNITED KINGDOM: ESG OVERVIEW

Following Brexit, the UK has pursued a distinct ESG regulatory path, balancing competitiveness with targeted disclosure and market integrity. By 2026, the FCA's Sustainability Disclosure Requirements are operational, introducing mandatory fund labelling and enhanced transparency for asset managers and investment products.

The UK Sustainability Reporting Standards are now bedded in for listed companies, with an emphasis on transition planning, credible data and anti greenwashing controls. While the UK has not mirrored EU style mandatory human rights due diligence, scrutiny of supply chains has intensified through regulatory inquiry, investor pressure and litigation risk.

As a result, ESG activity in the UK has become more selective and technical, with organisations prioritising governance, reporting assurance and implementation capability over broad sustainability programmes.

UNITED KINGDOM

According to The Global City, the United Kingdom is a ‘global centre of academic excellence’, with one of the most skilled workforces in the world.

It’s been a turbulent few years for the UK politically and economically, following its departure from the European Union. Many talented workers from neighbouring European countries were forced to move away. However, the employment market remains robust, and wages are relatively competitive versus many of its European counterparts.

The UK workforce has seen a notable shift towards remote and hybrid work arrangements since the COVID-19 pandemic, along with a high emphasis on employee wellbeing. Environmental sustainability is also growing in importance for both employers and employees.

Ease of doing business ranking = 8

CAPITAL	London
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	English
POPULATION	68.53 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Pound Sterling (GBP)
VAT	20%



Hiring Considerations

- The average working week is between 37 and 40 hours.
- Flexible working arrangements have become increasingly popular in recent years and many employees prefer to split their time between an office and working from home.
- Employers are required to offer British workers at least 5.6 weeks of paid leave. This may include public and bank holidays, of which there are eight in the UK. For someone who works full-time, this will equate to 28 days of paid holiday.
- British workers between the ages of 22 and state pension age who earn £10,000 or more per year and usually work in the UK are legally entitled to a pension scheme, provided by their employer.

Cultural Considerations

- Handshakes are expected when you meet someone for the first time
- Businesses place high importance on good etiquette when it comes to phone and email communication; blunt messages can be interpreted as rudeness
- Workplaces are friendly and dress codes range from casual to formal, depending on the industry and the company's individual culture.

“The UK has traditionally lagged behind parts of Europe on human rights hiring, but that gap is now closing. With greater regulatory clarity in place and the extraterritorial impact of CS3D becoming better understood, we expect 2026 to be a year of more deliberate investment in supply chain, ESG reporting and transition planning roles.”

Adam Bond
Leonid Group

HUMAN RIGHTS

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (GBP)
Head of Human Rights (VP)	£120,000 - £180,000
Human Rights Specialist / Officer / Manager	£50,000 - £110,000

SUSTAINABILITY

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (GBP)
Chief Sustainability Officer (EVP/SVP)	£125,000 - £225,000
Head of Sustainability / ESG (VP)	£100,000 - £150,000
Senior Sustainability / ESG Manager	£60,000 - £100,000
Sustainability / ESG Manager	£50,000 - £80,000
Sustainability / ESG Officer	£40,000 - £65,000
Sustainability / ESG Analyst	£35,000 - £55,000

ESG REPORTING

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (GBP)
Head of ESG Reporting (VP)	£80,000 - £140,000
ESG Reporting Manager	£65,000 - £100,000
ESG Reporting Officer	£45,000 - £65,000



FRANCE: ESG OVERVIEW

France continues to occupy a leading position in European ESG and human rights governance. The Corporate Duty of Vigilance Law remains a defining feature of the market, requiring large organisations to actively identify, prevent and remediate human rights and environmental risks across their supply chains.

By 2026, CSRD requirements are fully embedded for in scope organisations, with assurance and data credibility now a central focus. While regulatory simplification at EU level has reduced some reporting burden, it has not diluted expectations around implementation quality or executive accountability.

In practice, ESG in France is increasingly treated as a legal, operational and reputational risk discipline, reinforcing sustained demand for professionals who can deliver pragmatic, defensible frameworks rather than narrative reporting.

FRANCE

France is the third-largest economy in Europe, and the sixth largest in the world in terms of GDP. It is an advanced and industrialised country and is home to a sophisticated financial market. This, coupled with France's highly educated workforce, makes it an attractive place for business growth.

Several industries contribute to the French economy, namely energy, transport, manufacturing, technology, tourism and agriculture.

In the face of global economic challenges, France has maintained a relatively stable job market — as of December 2024, the national unemployment rate stands at 7.4%, outperforming the average rate in the European Union.

One of the key contributors to France's employment landscape is its thriving tech industry and a steadily growing financial services sector.

Ease of doing business ranking = 32

CAPITAL	Paris
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	French
POPULATION	68.29 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Euro
VAT	20%



Hiring Considerations

- Probation periods are not mandatory in French employment contracts, but they typically last between two to four months.
- Notice periods: this depends on how long the employee has worked for the company. Employees will usually need to provide one month's notice if they've been employed for six months to two years.
- Employees who have been employed for more than two years usually must provide two months' notice, and those in executive positions may need to provide a three-month notice.

Cultural Considerations

- French business etiquette is rather formal, and it's always better to err on the side of formality than to be seen as disrespectful.
- It's customary to address people by their formal title, such as Monsieur or Madame, until invited to use their first name.
- Handshakes are the norm in business situations, and it's considered polite to greet everyone individually when entering a room.
- The French place a high value on work-life balance. You may find that work hours are shorter than in some other countries, with 35 hours per week on average.
- French people tend to be direct in their communication

“France continues to set the pace on human rights and ESG hiring, particularly among large multinationals. While regulatory simplification has eased some pressure, the underlying demand for credible implementation expertise remains strong. As we progress through 2026, we expect increased hiring linked to CS3D readiness, rather than headline reporting compliance.”

Adam Bond

HUMAN RIGHTS

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Head of Human Rights (VP)	€110,000 – €160,000
Human Rights Specialist / Officer / Manager	€60,000 – €120,000

SUSTAINABILITY

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Chief Sustainability Officer (EVP/SVP)	€130,000 – €220,000
Head of Sustainability / ESG (VP)	€110,000 – €160,000
Senior Sustainability / ESG Manager	€70,000 – €110,000
Sustainability / ESG Manager	€60,000 – €80,000
Sustainability / ESG Officer	€45,000 – €70,000
Sustainability / ESG Analyst	€36,000 – €60,000

ESG REPORTING

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Head of ESG Reporting (VP)	€100,000 – €170,000
ESG Reporting Manager	€60,000 – €110,000
ESG Reporting Officer	€45,000 – €70,000



GERMANY: ESG OVERVIEW

Germany remains one of Europe's most mature ESG and human rights jurisdictions. The Supply Chain Due Diligence Act (LkSG) continues to drive extensive organisational investment, particularly around risk mapping, remediation processes and supplier engagement.

Although Germany has supported regulatory simplification at EU level, this has not materially softened enforcement expectations. Instead, focus has shifted towards effectiveness, auditability and integration with broader risk management structures.

By 2026, ESG activity in Germany is characterised less by new regulation and more by **deep operationalisation**, requiring skilled professionals who understand both regulatory intent and complex supply chain execution.

GERMANY

Germany has a diverse population of over 84 million people, with a highly skilled talent pool. The country places a high emphasis on education, with a literacy rate of 99% and an extensive system of universities and vocational schools.

The business climate is favourable, with a strong focus on innovation and a range of government incentives for business growth.

Germany's top industries include automotive manufacturing, chemical production, engineering, and healthcare. The country is the world's leading exporter of cars, with major companies such as Volkswagen, BMW, and Mercedes-Benz headquartered in Germany.

German employees value a positive work environment that fosters collaboration, creativity, and innovation. Studies have found that they prioritise work-life balance, job security and professional development opportunities.

Ease of doing business ranking = 22

CAPITAL	Berlin
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	German, plus some regional dialects
POPULATION	83.28 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Euro
VAT	19%



Hiring Considerations

- The standard working week in Germany is 40 hours, with an average of 8 hours per day.
- Employers are obligated to provide health insurance, pension insurance, accident insurance and unemployment insurance to all employees.
- Bundesurlaubsgesetz — the Federal Holiday Act — dictates that employees get 20 days of leave or 24 days if they work six days a week instead of five. However, most employers offer more this statutory minimum.
- Notice periods are typically stipulated in the employment contract and vary based on the length of service. For example, a standard notice period is four weeks but can be longer for employees with several years of service.

Cultural Considerations

- Germans value punctuality, professionalism, and a thorough approach to business. Be prepared for structured and detail-oriented interactions with German professionals.
- While many Germans are proficient in English, especially in business settings, a basic understanding of the German language can be highly beneficial.

“Germany remains Leonid’s most active market for human rights and supply chain due diligence roles. What has changed is the profile clients are targeting: moving away from purely academic backgrounds, towards professionals with proven corporate implementation experience. This trend will continue as supply chains face greater disruption and scrutiny.”

Adam Bond
Leonid Group

HUMAN RIGHTS

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Head of Human Rights (VP)	€120,000 - €225,000
Human Rights Specialist / Officer / Manager	€70,000 - €110,000

SUSTAINABILITY

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Chief Sustainability Officer (EVP/SVP)	€150,000 - €280,000
Head of Sustainability / ESG (VP)	€100,000 - €180,000
Senior Sustainability / ESG Manager	€80,000 - €100,000
Sustainability / ESG Manager	€60,000 - €90,000
Sustainability / ESG Officer	€50,000 - €75,000
Sustainability / ESG Analyst	€45,000 - €65,000

ESG REPORTING

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Head of ESG Reporting (VP)	€95,000 - €150,000
ESG Reporting Manager	€70,000 - €100,000
ESG Reporting Officer	€50,000 - €75,000



SWITZERLAND: ESG OVERVIEW

Switzerland's ESG framework combines mandatory reporting obligations with strong self-regulatory standards, particularly within financial services. By 2026, non-financial reporting and due diligence requirements covering climate risk, conflict minerals and child labour are well established for large organisations.

Climate-related financial disclosures continue to be a central focus, with organisations expected to demonstrate both transparency and credible risk mitigation strategies. In parallel, industry-led sustainable finance initiatives have reinforced expectations around data quality and governance maturity.

As a result, Switzerland has emerged as a strategic location for senior ESG leadership, particularly where organisations require coordination across EU and global reporting regimes.

SWITZERLAND

Switzerland is widely recognised as a ‘safe haven’ within Europe and a land of opportunity for both individuals and businesses to live and work.

Given its relatively small size and a highly liberal economic structure, it can quickly adapt to internal and external challenges. Switzerland is renowned for its stable and reliable business environment, which is supported by its well-developed legal system and robust regulations.

Around two thirds of Switzerland’s working population originate from EU countries, predominantly Italy, Germany, Portugal, France and Kosovo.

Ease of doing business ranking = 36

CAPITAL	Bern
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	German, French
POPULATION	8.88 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Swiss Franc (CHF)
VAT	8.1%



Hiring Considerations

- The working week in Switzerland is 40 to 42 hours. Workers are generally entitled to 4 weeks' holiday.
- Notice periods are variable, typically ranging from one to six months.

Cultural Considerations

- Swiss work culture is rooted in formality. Formal business attire is generally expected and it is usual to address someone by their last name and title (e.g. Mr, Mrs, Dr) until they indicate otherwise.

- There are three main languages spoken in Swiss workplaces: German, French, English — it is widely expected that job candidates would have fluency in at least two of these three.
- The Swiss value punctuality and direct communication, so when interviewing Swiss candidates, it is important that the interview is well-structured.

“Switzerland continues to attract strategically important ESG and human rights leadership roles, particularly for organisations managing complex European and global reporting obligations. We’re frequently seeing senior roles located in Switzerland, with execution capacity often built across neighbouring EU markets to balance cost, language and regulatory exposure..”

Adam Bond
Leonid Group

HUMAN RIGHTS

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (CHF)
Head of Human Rights (VP)	CHF 165,000 – CHF 230,000
Human Rights Specialist / Officer / Manager	CHF 92,000 – CHF 155,000

SUSTAINABILITY

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (CHF)
Chief Sustainability Officer (EVP/SVP)	CHF 180,000 – CHF 350,000
Head of Sustainability / ESG (VP)	CHF 135,000 – CHF 220,000
Senior Sustainability / ESG Manager	CHF 125,000 – CHF 190,000
Sustainability / ESG Manager	CHF 105,000 – CHF 145,000
Sustainability / ESG Officer	CHF 72,000 – CHF 94,000
Sustainability / ESG Analyst	CHF 66,000 – CHF 84,000

ESG REPORTING

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (CHF)
Head of ESG Reporting (VP)	CHF 125,000 – CHF 200,000
ESG Reporting Manager	CHF 88,000 – CHF 125,000
ESG Reporting Officer	CHF 75,000 – CHF 105,000



THE NETHERLANDS: ESG OVERVIEW

ESG governance in the Netherlands has become firmly embedded at board level, driven by early and proactive alignment with EU sustainability regulation. CSRD implementation is now a core compliance activity for qualifying organisations, supported by active supervision from the Dutch Authority for the Financial Markets.

Although EU level simplification has reduced some reporting complexity, expectations around data reliability, consistency and assurance remain high. Dutch organisations have been notably proactive in preparing for wider supply chain due diligence requirements, even where domestic law is not yet fully prescriptive.

By 2026, ESG in the Netherlands is characterised by forward planning and early adoption — particularly within international HQ and holding company environments.

THE NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands is a forward-thinking nation, well connected to the other major economies of Europe and with a favourable fiscal climate, making it a prime country for sourcing multilingual and highly-skilled workers. The Dutch typically have excellent English language skills and many also speak German.

It is a small but mighty country, having the fifth-largest economy in the EU in 2024. The key industries here are aerospace, chemicals, energy, financial services, life sciences, IT and logistics.

The country has a strong focus on work-life balance, and family-friendly benefits are commonplace.

Dutch employment law is extensive, and regulations must be followed by any company that employs workers in the Netherlands, even if the organisation is registered in a different country.

Ease of doing business ranking = 42

CAPITAL	Amsterdam
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	Dutch, English
POPULATION	17.9 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Euro (EUR)
VAT	21%



Hiring Considerations

- The Netherlands has an extensive social security system which covers employees for health, death, old age, long-term disability, certain medical expenses and childcare and unemployment.
- National insurance is compulsory for anyone permanently working in the Netherlands. Social security premiums (also referred to as employee insurance) must be paid entirely by the employer.
- Many people work part-time in the Netherlands and requests for part-time work can only be turned down if there is a strong, objective reason not to permit it.
- Probation periods can last for a maximum of two months for permanent employees. Fixed-term contracts permit a maximum of one month's probation.

Cultural Considerations

- The Dutch are known for their direct manner and honesty. It's not a case of being harsh; they simply value pragmatism and clear communication.
- Decision-making is very much done by consensus, with multiple stakeholders involved.
- Efficiency and punctuality are highly valued.
- Workplace hierarchies tend to be flat, with everyone encouraged to voice their views and senior management are typically open to challenge, so long as it is done respectfully.

“Although the Netherlands does not face the same level of domestic regulatory pressure as some of its neighbours, Dutch organisations have been proactive. Many businesses have invested ahead of CS3D requirements, driving steady demand for ESG reporting, governance and supply chain professionals — particularly within international HQ environments.”

Adam Bond

HUMAN RIGHTS

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Head of Human Rights (VP)	€100,000 - €175,000
Human Rights Specialist / Officer / Manager	€60,000 - €120,000

SUSTAINABILITY

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Chief Sustainability Officer (EVP/SVP)	€130,000 - €250,000
Head of Sustainability / ESG (VP)	€100,000 - €180,000
Senior Sustainability / ESG Manager	€80,000 - €100,000
Sustainability / ESG Manager	€60,000 - €90,000
Sustainability / ESG Officer	€45,000 - €70,000
Sustainability / ESG Analyst	€40,000 - €60,000

ESG REPORTING

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (EUR)
Head of ESG Reporting (VP)	€90,000 - €150,000
ESG Reporting Manager	€65,000 - €100,000
ESG Reporting Officer	€50,000 - €75,000



NORWAY: ESG OVERVIEW

Norway continues to rank among the most advanced ESG and human rights markets globally. Although not an EU member, Norway has fully integrated the CSRD into domestic law, reinforcing consistency with European sustainability reporting standards.

The Transparency Act remains a cornerstone of Norway's human rights framework, imposing disclosure and due diligence obligations across a broad range of businesses. Enforcement has increasingly focused on remedy, governance quality and responsiveness to stakeholder scrutiny.

With strong national commitment to renewable energy and ethical business conduct, ESG in Norway is now less about legislative expansion and more about depth, execution and disclosure credibility.

NORWAY

Norway is the best country to live in according to the United Nations, thanks to its impressive healthcare system and work–life balance.

Norway is home to one of the strongest economies in the world, and the country places a high priority on technology, knowledge development and sustainable business.

Norway is a world leader in energy, oil and gas and maritime sectors and is seeing huge developments in other areas, such as fintech, medtech and edtech. It is also rich in natural resources and is a leading European producer of renewable energy: 98% of the country's electricity production is based on renewables.

Ease of doing business ranking = 9

CAPITAL	Oslo
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	Norwegian
POPULATION	5.5 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Norwegian Krone (NOK)
VAT	25%



Hiring Considerations

- Working hours in Norway are typically nine hours per day within a 24-hour period, or 40 hours per week within a seven-day work week.
- Employees (even those who are not residents) receiving remuneration for work performed in Norway are eligible for social security and pension contributions.
- Norway offers a generous maternity and paternity leave package. This is either 80% compensation rate of the average salary for 59 weeks or 100% of the average salary for 49 weeks. Parents also have the option to take a leave of absence for an additional year without compensation.
- Probation periods can be up to six months long.

Cultural Considerations

- Continuous development is important – Norway has the second highest participation rate in job-related continued education and training, in all of Europe.
- Norwegians are focused on high quality output and efficiency. They are honest and direct in their communication, but typically warm and friendly, too.
- Workplaces are generally quite informal in terms of business dress.
- Work-life balance and ‘family time’ are highly valued.

“Norway remains one of the most mature markets for ESG and human rights capability. The Transparency Act continues to drive demand for specialists with deep regulatory understanding and practical business insight. We’re seeing more organisations move beyond compliance and focus more heavily on disclosure quality and remediation processes.”

Adam Bond
Leonid Group

HUMAN RIGHTS

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (NOK)
Head of Human Rights (VP)	NOK 1,200,000 – NOK 1,800,000
Human Rights Specialist / Officer / Manager	NOK 650,000 – NOK 900,000

SUSTAINABILITY

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (NOK)
Chief Sustainability Officer (EVP/SVP)	NOK 1,500,000 – NOK 2,600,000
Head of Sustainability / ESG (VP)	NOK 1,100,000 – NOK 1,700,000
Senior Sustainability / ESG Manager	NOK 900,000 – NOK 1,300,000
Sustainability / ESG Manager	NOK 650,000 – NOK 950,000
Sustainability / ESG Officer	NOK 500,000 – NOK 800,000
Sustainability / ESG Analyst	NOK 400,000 – NOK 700,000

ESG REPORTING

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (NOK)
Head of ESG Reporting (VP)	NOK 950,000 – NOK 1,500,000
ESG Reporting Manager	NOK 650,000 – NOK 950,000
ESG Reporting Officer	NOK 450,000 – NOK 750,000



SOUTH KOREA: ESG OVERVIEW

South Korea's ESG regime has matured rapidly but in a measured and phased manner. Mandatory ESG disclosures for large listed companies are now transitioning from consultation to implementation, with companies expected to demonstrate readiness rather than mere intention.

Judicial developments have further elevated ESG expectations, particularly around climate accountability and inter generational rights. At the same time, policy recalibration – such as reduced biomass subsidies – reflects a more pragmatic approach to environmental sustainability.

By 2026, ESG in South Korea is increasingly driven by international alignment, particularly for organisations with EU or global exposure, reinforcing demand for professionals who can bridge local regulation and global standards

SOUTH KOREA

South Korea, officially known as the Republic of Korea (ROK), is a highly developed country, with a GDP of USD\$1.713 trillion as of 2023.

In recent years, South Korea has become a major influence on pop culture with Korean Pop (K-Pop) music soaring in popularity across the world. Music aside, South Korea is one of the most influential countries in Asia and a high proportion of the business world speak fluent English, making it an excellent hub for regional operations.

South Korea is home to a highly educated and qualified employee population of approximately 28 million people. Key industries include electronics, automobiles, telecommunications, shipbuilding, steel and chemicals.

Ease of doing business ranking = 5

CAPITAL	Seoul
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	Korean, English, Japanese, Mandarin
POPULATION	51.7 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	South Korean Won (KRW)
VAT	10% on the supply of goods and services, except zero-rated VAT on certain supply of goods and services.



Hiring Considerations

- Residents are subject to tax on their worldwide income, and non-residents are taxed only on their Korean source of income. To become a resident, workers have to either have a domicile in the country or spend 183 days or more in South Korea.
- Income tax rates range from 6% to 45%, depending on rates of pay.
- Expatriate workers in South Korea can be put on a flat PIT (personal income tax) rate of 20.9% for a period of 20 years from the date they first pay tax in the country.
- The standard working hours in South Korea are eight hours per day and 40 hours per week. Although the government discourages working over and above these hours, and work-life balance is promoted, it's not uncommon for people to occasionally work late into the evening.
- The government recently introduced a "working hours savings system" whereby employees can accumulate overtime hours as paid leave days. These hours can be used in addition to annual paid leave entitlements. This enables employees to work flexibly and opt for such as a four-day workweek and a sabbatical month.

Cultural Considerations

- Most offices use Korean as their primary language. However, that depends on the type of company. In Korean corporate culture, some multinational companies may use a mix of Korean, English and other languages.
- Hierarchy is very much respected in South Korean culture and the same is true of its workplaces. But at the same time, teamwork and camaraderie are highly valued. Team dinners and evenings out are actively encouraged.
- Despite the increasing integration of Western values into South Korean culture, the society is still relatively conservative, although less so amongst the younger generation.
- Many Koreans use a 'westernised' version of their original Korean name to adapt to international and English-speaking contexts. This may involve reversing the arrangement of their given name and family name.

“South Korea’s ESG hiring market has developed more gradually than expected, but regulatory momentum is now building. Organisations with EU and global exposure are making more deliberate investments in ESG and human rights capability, either through regional hubs or by partnering closely with European teams.”

Adam Bond
Leonid Group

HUMAN RIGHTS

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (KRW)
Head of Human Rights (VP)	KRW 145,000,000 – KRW 210,000,000
Human Rights Specialist / Officer / Manager	KRW 65,000,000 – KRW 140,000,000

SUSTAINABILITY

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (KRW)
Chief Sustainability Officer (EVP/SVP)	KRW 155,000,000 – KRW 255,000,000
Head of Sustainability / ESG (VP)	KRW 135,000,000 – KRW 200,000,000
Senior Sustainability / ESG Manager	KRW 110,000,000 – KRW 170,000,000
Sustainability / ESG Manager	KRW 80,000,000 – KRW 110,000,000
Sustainability / ESG Officer	KRW 60,000,000 – KRW 85,000,000
Sustainability / ESG Analyst	KRW 55,000,000 – KRW 75,000,000

ESG REPORTING

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (KRW)
Head of ESG Reporting (VP)	KRW 110,000,000 – KRW 175,000,000
ESG Reporting Manager	KRW 85,000,000 – KRW 135,000,000
ESG Reporting Officer	KRW 80,000,000 – KRW 95,000,000



AUSTRALIA: ESG OVERVIEW

Australia has decisively shifted ESG reporting from voluntary commitments to mandatory compliance. Climate related financial disclosures are now in force for in scope entities, placing increased responsibility on boards and senior management for accuracy and governance.

Human rights oversight has also strengthened, supported by the Anti Slavery Commissioner and heightened regulatory scrutiny of supply chains. These developments have extended ESG accountability well beyond traditionally regulated sectors such as resources and mining.

In 2026, Australia's ESG environment is defined by enforcement, assurance and cross sector adoption, positioning ESG as a core governance function rather than a specialist sustainability niche.

AUSTRALIA

Australia has a highly educated, skilled and English-speaking population and an open economy that ranks 12th in the world by GDP, with strong trade links. It is also strategically placed in its proximity to the Asia Pacific region. It attracts strong foreign investment and many ex-patriate workers.

Australia experienced an unprecedented job boom in the aftermath of the pandemic, most notably within the healthcare & social assistance sector. This demand is driven by Australia's ageing population, which will continue underpin job creation for the foreseeable future. Other major growth areas are professional services and construction and mining continues to be one of the biggest industries.

Australia offers a high quality of life, but the cost of living is relatively steep and at the time of writing, the country is experiencing one of the toughest 'cost of living crises' in the Western world

Australia has also recently expanded its skilled migration policy as there are skill shortages in a number of areas, particularly within IT disciplines.

Ease of doing business ranking = 14

CAPITAL	Canberra
LANGUAGES SPOKEN	English
POPULATION	27.1 million
PAYROLL	Monthly/bi-monthly
CURRENCY	Australian dollar (AUD)
VAT	10%



Hiring Considerations

- Superannuation, also referred to as ‘Super’, is a retirement pension benefits fund which is mandatory for all employees in Australia. As of 2024, employers contribute 11.5% of an employee’s ordinary time earnings. It will rise by 0.5% again in 2025.
- The amount of income tax paid by employees depends on earnings. The first AUD\$18,200 is exempt from tax.
- Medicare is a national insurance scheme that provides free or subsidised healthcare for Australians. The Medicare levy consists of 2% of an Australian resident’s taxable income and must be paid in addition to their personal income tax.
- There are eight states in Australia and there are some variations in the terms of local employment laws.

Cultural Considerations

- Work-life balance is highly valued and so most workplaces offer flexible working patterns to fit around family and other commitments
- Workplace dress is usually smart casual or fully casual, depending on the industry/size of the business.
- Equality, inclusion and diversity underscore working life in Australia, so workplace hierarchies are typically very flat.
- Australian working life is friendly and sociable.

“Human rights and supply chain due diligence have long been embedded in parts of the Australian market, particularly in mining and infrastructure. This expertise is now being applied across a much broader range of sectors, with ESG advisory and internal roles growing steadily across financial services, energy and professional services.”

Adam Bond
Leonid Group

HUMAN RIGHTS

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (AUD)
Head of Human Rights (VP)	AUD 150,000 – AUD 235,000
Human Rights Specialist / Officer / Manager	AUD 75,000 – AUD 120,000

SUSTAINABILITY

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (AUD)
Chief Sustainability Officer (EVP/SVP)	AUD 185,000 – AUD 320,000
Head of Sustainability / ESG (VP)	AUD 145,000 – AUD 225,000
Senior Sustainability / ESG Manager	AUD 105,000 – AUD 155,000
Sustainability / ESG Manager	AUD 92,000 – AUD 128,000
Sustainability / ESG Officer	AUD 88,000 – AUD 115,000
Sustainability / ESG Analyst	AUD 72,000 – AUD 105,000

ESG REPORTING

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (AUD)
Head of ESG Reporting (VP)	AUD 125,000 – AUD 190,000
ESG Reporting Manager	AUD 93,000 – AUD 132,000
ESG Reporting Officer	AUD 71,000 – AUD 105,000

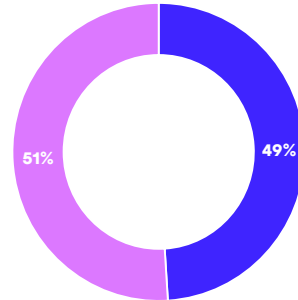
03.

TALENT INTELLIGENCE DATA

In addition to recruitment, Leonid also offers ‘Talent Intelligence’ — data-driven insights to guide our clients’ decisions around hiring, retention, and workforce planning. Here’s a snapshot of what our data is telling us about the current ESG global hiring market.



Hiring Demand in ESG Globally is High



Gender Diversity Split
51% Female 49% Male

2.1 YEARS

Median Tenure of Candidates globally

11.4%

% of professionals who moved jobs in the last year

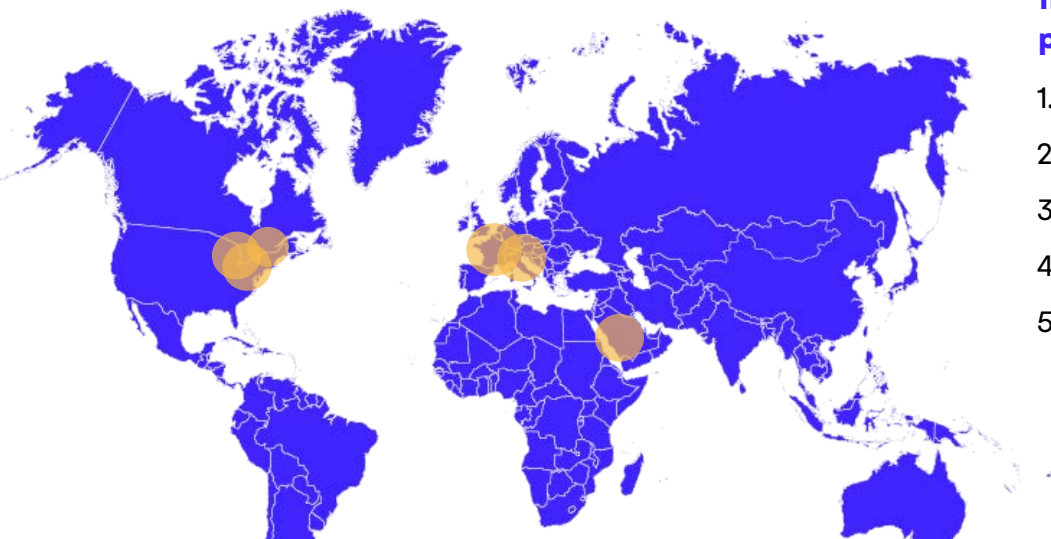
What matters most to ESG candidates globally

Value proposition	Top Priority
1. Compensation & Benefits	55%
2. Flexible Work Arrangements	55%
3. Work-life balance	48%
4. Challenging & impactful work	41%
5. Opportunity to work on innovative projects	34%

Top 3 industries employing this talent

1. Civil Engineering
2. Construction
3. Real estate

Hiring Hotspots



What are the top locations for this talent? (highest number of professionals)

1. London Area, United Kingdom
2. Netherlands
3. Greater Paris Metropolitan
4. New York City Metropolitan Area
5. Saudi Arabia



03.

CONCLUSION

ESG, sustainability and human rights are no longer emerging disciplines. However, they are far from settled.

Organisations that succeed in this environment are those that:

- Treat ESG as a material business risk, not a reputational exercise
- Invest in credible, experienced professionals
- Build structures that can evolve alongside regulation

With demand continuing to outpace supply, securing the right talent requires planning, realism and access to the passive market.

This is where specialist insight becomes a competitive advantage

How Leonid's Talent Intelligence strengthens ESG talent strategy

In ESG, sustainability and human rights, reactive hiring is increasingly risky. Regulation moves faster than internal capability, and many organisations only discover skills gaps once compliance deadlines approach.

Leonid's [Talent Intelligence](#) service helps organisations move from short-term hiring to long-term workforce strategy.

Understanding the real ESG talent market

Talent Intelligence combines real-time market data with insights from Leonid's global ESG network to provide clarity on:

- Where ESG and human rights talent is located
- Which skills are genuinely scarce versus over-specified
- How competitors are structuring ESG teams
- The likely impact of regulation on future hiring demand

This enables organisations to make evidence-based decisions on where to hire, what to hire and when.

Complementing executive search

While Leonid's search capability focuses on securing high-impact individuals – often from the passive market – Talent Intelligence ensures those hires sit within a coherent, scalable talent strategy.

The outcome is not just better hiring, but more resilient ESG functions built for long-term regulatory and operational relevance.

To find out more about Leonid's Talent Intelligence service – or to book a demo with a free Talent Intelligence 'Lite' assessment, please contact [Adam Bond](#).

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Ready to get in touch with us?

Leonid is a leading, international recruiter in ESG, sustainability and human rights – and all areas of corporate governance.

If you are looking to bolster your team, we can proactively seek out the best candidates and have them ready to join you within 30 days of instruction.

To find out more about Leonid's service, please visit our website:

www.leonid-group.com

Or, to request a meeting with our Head of ESG, Sustainability & Human Rights, Adam Bond, please email him directly:

adam@leonid-group.com

You can also reach out via the following methods:

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