

GLOBAL HIRING GUIDE: ESG, SUSTAINABILITY & HUMAN RIGHTS

Salary data and hiring considerations, country by country



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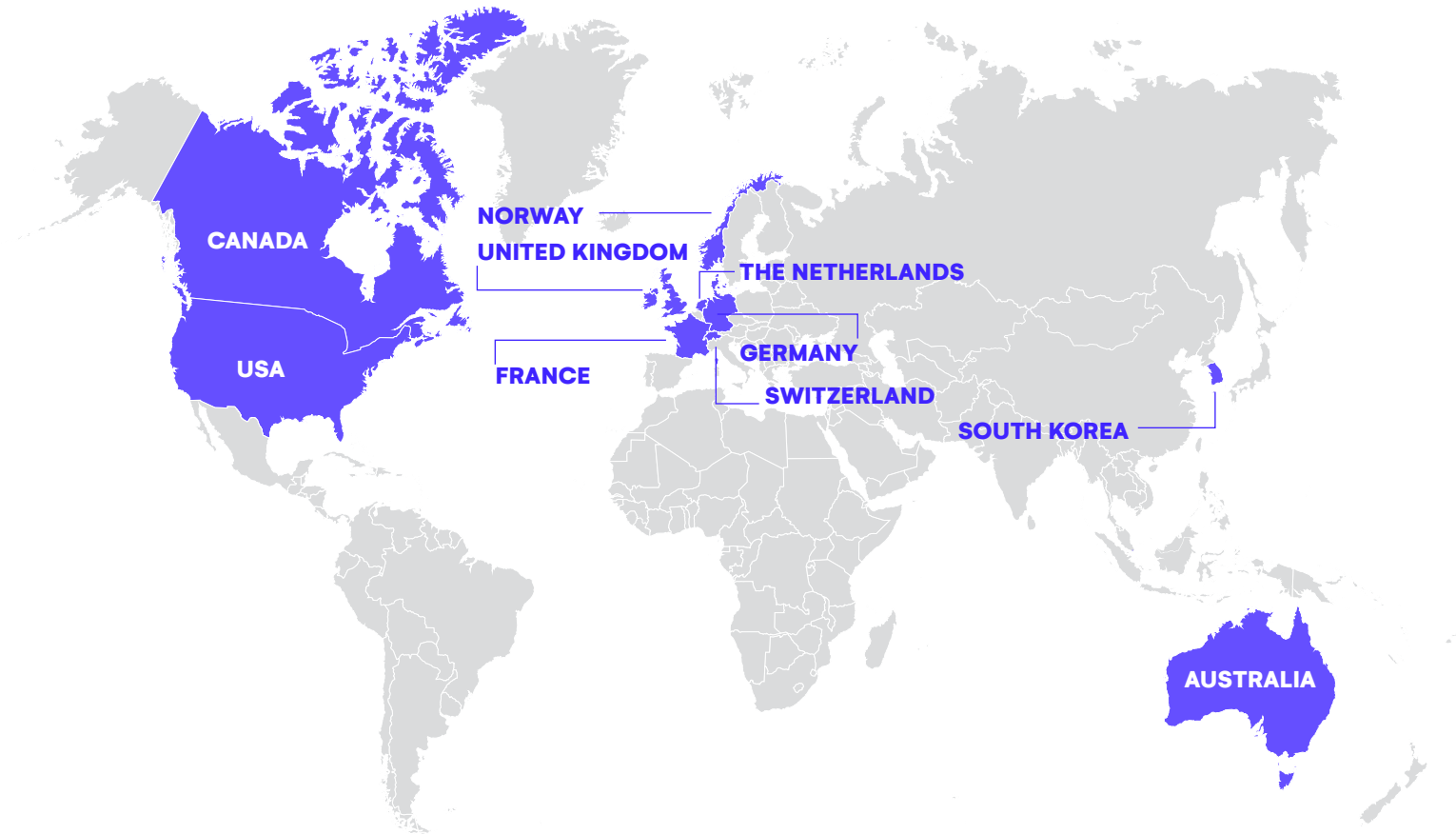
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01.

INTRODUCTION:

A GLOBAL ESG OVERVIEW

2023 was a clear turning point for the ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) movement. Mainstream media became quite polarised; on the one hand it was shaming those corporations who were falling short of expectations and on the other, it was calling into question the very essence of ESG, its effectiveness and impact.

However, 2024 is already seeing a shift in perceptions and businesses know they have to take their obligations seriously, if they are to remain competitive and keep their reputation intact.

ESG will no longer be seen as just a compliance or risk management exercise but as a fundamental aspect of business strategy. This means that companies must go beyond a tick-box exercise and instead fully immerse ESG considerations into their operations. This may require rethinking certain processes, procurement strategies and marketing plans.

Companies which fail to take ESG seriously now risk alienating several stakeholder groups — including investors and customers — which not only harm's an organisation's reputation but also limits the markets they can operate in.

Furthermore, companies are increasingly under pressure to deliver on metrics relating to a wide range of ESG matters, including impact on biodiversity, the use of water and other natural resources, treatment of workers, progress on diversity and much more.

Crucially, these measures apply throughout the supply chain, so responsible supply chain management is a key element of ESG transparency and overall compliance with emerging regulations.

Creating and implementing a robust ESG strategy has never been more critical.

Many investors have now come to expect companies to have high ESG ratings and to be demonstrating ongoing commitment to improving them.

Human Rights in the spotlight

Global organisations are under increasing scrutiny, when it comes to Human Rights due diligence.

Human Rights due diligence has always been best practice, and there is a compelling business case for taking proactive steps to build out an internal human rights function. Until very recently, it has been a voluntary action by companies wishing to preserve their corporate reputation. Now, things are changing.

New legislation is already underway in a number of EU countries, with Germany leading the way. Under Germany's Supply Chain Due Diligence Act, it is already mandatory – for any international company with more than 1,000 employees in Germany – to employ a Human Rights leader and to demonstrate full compliance with the Act. Around 3,000 companies are within this scope.

Following Germany's lead, the EU has just passed legislation to extend the regulations to all EU countries with its Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CS3D), which was approved by the European Parliament in April 2024, with implementation due in 2027.

The focus of this legislation is supply chains, which have for many years been left vulnerable to accusations of sweatshops, dangerous working conditions, child labour and trafficking. No industry sector is immune, although the focus to date has been largely on manufacturing, energy and construction.

The implications of being caught up in a human rights controversy are immense. As a minimum, this would mean damage to corporate reputation, sales and share values. However, under this new legislation, serious financial penalties are now also at stake.

While Europe may be leading the way, countries around the world know that this legislation is coming and many large businesses are taking steps now, to futureproof their business.

The war for talent

With ESG, sustainability and human rights all firmly on the agenda for most large businesses, demand for skilled and experienced professionals worldwide has been steadily rising. As such, many employers have been looking outside of their traditional hiring pools with a view to training and developing professionals from a range of backgrounds, including legal, compliance and consulting.

Leonid has worked with many companies who have successfully adopted this approach.

If you are looking to bolster your organisation's ESG, Sustainability or Human Rights expertise, Leonid can help with hiring at all levels and in all geographies.



02.

COUNTRY GUIDES

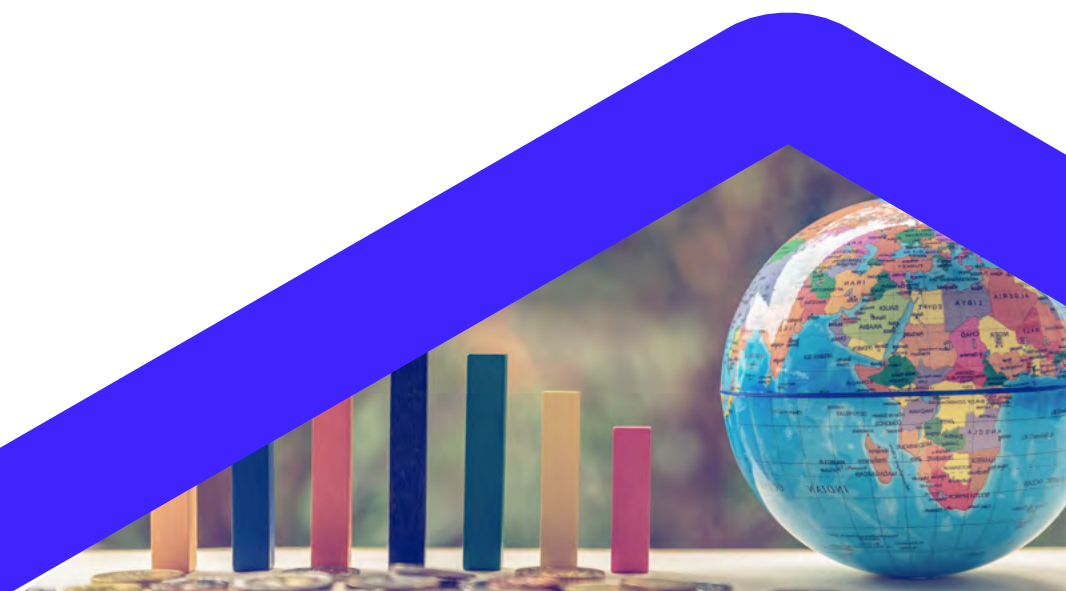
In the following section, you will find an overview of key drivers and trends in the ESG, Sustainability and Human Rights space on a country-by-country basis.

Please note that this information is correct at the time of going to print, but this is a rapidly changing 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.

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

ESG in the US continues to be hotly debated and contested. Conservative politicians have been successful in pushing back on ESG product marketing, in diluting regulations that promote ESG disclosures, and in discouraging financial firms from co-ordinating on curbing greenhouse gas emissions.

Wary of such contention, major financial institutions have recently stepped back from climate-related pledges, an example of which is the recent withdrawal of money managers, including BlackRock, State Street, JPMorgan and Pimco, from Climate Action 100+ after the group called on members to pressure major corporations to reduce emissions.

Other retreats include major banks deciding not to pursue a commitment to stop financing new coal mines, to cease publishing the exact energy mix included in investment portfolios, and to renew relationships with states that have criticised ESG-related initiatives.

With the US presidential vote due later in 2024, the future of ESG really hangs in the balance at this point in time.

At present, there is no requirement for mandatory human rights due diligence in the U.S. However, with Europe leading the way, it is surely only a matter of time before the U.S. takes more decisive action. An increasing number of large organisations are now looking to bolster their teams in readiness for this anticipated evolution.

A change for climate change?

In March 2024, the Securities & Exchange Commission (SEC) finalised and adopted The Enhancement and Standardization of Climate-Related Disclosures for Investors, which standardises climate-related disclosures by public companies and in public offerings. This disclosure is one of a number put forward around the world, in a bid to harmonise climate disclosures for the international business community.

USA

With a GDP of more than USD\$23 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 four cities ranking in the top 10 for global fintech, including Silicon Valley (#1) and Boston (#7).

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	332 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.

The US has witnessed huge regulatory upheaval in the past couple of years, but it still lags behind its European counterparts. As such, US roles are more holistic and internally-focused. At the moment, the businesses not affected by the EU legislation are all approaching the question of supply chain due diligence, broader human rights, ESG and sustainability topics in their own unique way — meaning there truly is no one size fits all in this US talent marketplace.

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)	\$150,000 – \$240,000
Head of Sustainability / ESG (VP)	\$80,000 – \$120,000
Senior Sustainability / ESG Manager	\$100,000 – \$175,000
Sustainability / ESG Manager	\$80,000 – \$120,000
Sustainability / ESG Officer	\$70,000 – \$100,000
Sustainability / ESG Analyst	\$60,000 – \$95,000

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

Like many other countries, Canada has been heavily focused on incorporating ESG factors into corporate disclosure requirements and guidance.

There is currently no single statute or regulatory framework that governs ESG and ESG disclosure in Canada. Instead, the Canadian government, regulatory bodies, and corporate entities and industry groups have collaborated to establish various frameworks — some voluntary and some mandatory — that address environmental sustainability, social responsibility and effective governance through multiple statutes, regulations, common law and industry guidance.

Human Rights

Canada's Fighting Against Forced Labour and Child Labour in Supply Chains Act came into force in January 2024. It applies to entities that meet certain thresholds — such as producing goods in Canada or importing goods into Canada and that meet certain asset, revenue or employment levels. Businesses in scope will be required to file an annual public report on measures they have taken to address and prevent forced and child labour in their supply chains during the previous fiscal year

Failure to comply with the Act will lead to reputational damage, investigations and fines.

The report must be made publicly available in a prominent place on the entity's website and every filed annual report will be posted on an online registry maintained by Public Safety Canada.

What's next?

Canada's legal landscape regarding ESG and ESG disclosure is continuing to evolve.

We have not yet seen the same degree of backlash or division regarding the incorporation of ESG factors into the business realm as there has been in the U.S; however, there have been emerging signs of debate.

Nonetheless, it is widely expected that ESG disclosure laws will soon be tightened in Canada, with the likely development of a disclosure regime implementing the ISSB standards and continued developments regarding diversity disclosure.

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 \$1.98 trillion in 2023.

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	38.7 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.

“The Canadian market has recently shifted. Previously more closely aligned to the US, new legislation focusing on forced labour in supply chains has set it on a path that from a talent perspective, mirrors Europe.”

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 160,000 – CAD 250,000
Head of Sustainability / ESG (VP)	CAD 130,000 – CAD 190,000
Senior Sustainability / ESG Manager	CAD 115,000 – CAD 140,000
Sustainability / ESG Manager	CAD 90,000 – CAD 125,000
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 U.K. has moved away from the EU's approach to ESG regulation.

Key EU legislation in this space, including the Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation, the Taxonomy Regulation and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive, have not been – and will not be – effectively implemented into UK law.

UK regulations have broadly focused on climate-related disclosures by UK-regulated entities, and have steered clear of the more ambitious objectives pursued by the EU.

Those objectives cover a broad taxonomy of environmental criteria beyond climate change, such as pollution prevention and the sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources, as well as social factors and impact on a broader category of entities, including non-EU based investment products sold into the EU, and non-EU companies with a certain threshold of EU earnings.

ESG and sustainability-related activities have not become politicised in the UK or the EU in the way in which they currently are in the U.S. Debates tend to centre on how the sustainability objectives are best achieved, rather than questioning their legitimacy.

One such example is a focus the cost of achieving net-zero by 2050, and the impact on consumers – and policies around issues such as the phasing out of gas boilers and petrol and diesel vehicles.

UNITED KINGDOM

According to The Global City, the United Kingdom is a ‘global centre of academic excellence.’ 58.5% of the UK’s workforce are educated to at least a degree level, making it 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 due to the impact of 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	67.22 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.

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“The UK has been lagging on hiring Human Rights professionals in comparison with its European neighbours. Not being subject to CS3D to the same degree as EU nations, there is a slow adoption by businesses to hire for Supply Chain Due Diligence. However, we are seeing signs of growth in the wake of the recent CS3D vote.”

Adam Bond
Leonid Group

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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

In France, ESG is commonly referred to as RSE (Responsabilité Sociétale des Entreprises) and incorporates ISR (Investissement Socialement Responsable — or Socially Responsible Investment, in English).

There is strong public concern in France around environmental protection and climate change. This is reflected by the enactment of two major pieces of legislation over the past three years, which have reshaped the environmental aspect of ESG regulations. This started with the Anti-Waste Law (2020), which answered the call for consumer transparency through the labelling of waste-generating products. The Climate and Resilience Law (2021) proposed 149 measures to achieve at least a 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 (versus 1990 levels).

French investors and asset managers are increasingly focused on ESG. In a survey conducted by the French Institute of Public Opinion (“IFOP”) in September 2022, 60% of French investors said it was important to integrate social and environmental impacts in their investment strategy, with the top three considerations being pollution, human rights and employment. This result is in line with the rapid growth in socially responsible investments and ESG funds.

However, some investors still favour traditional investment strategies, with the focus firmly on financial metrics. Firstly, some fear that prioritising ESG factors could compromise returns; and secondly, there are concerns around greenwashing and the perception that ESG principles are superficial, offering limited genuine impact.

Human Rights — Vigilance Plan

In 2017, France adopted a law which obliges large companies to carry out human rights and environmental due diligence and publish a ‘Vigilance Plan’ each year. The aim of this legislation was to ensure that large French companies are taking the correct measures to identify and prevent human rights and environmental violations in their supply chains.

The French Corporate Duty of Vigilance Law applies to French companies with more than 5,000 employees worldwide and non-French companies operating in France with more than 10,000 employees worldwide.

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 2023, the national unemployment rate stands at 7.2%, 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	67.39 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

“The Vigilance law has meant that French businesses been busy hiring their Human Rights professionals over the course of the past 5 years, although this has predominantly been confined to very large businesses. The CS3D roll-out will no doubt see a very interesting wave of hiring.”

Adam Bond
Leonid Group

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 has undoubtedly been the leading light on human rights due diligence matters.

Germany's Supply Chain Due Diligence Act — known locally as LkSG — came into force in January 2023 and really paved the way for mandatory due diligence legislation to be implemented across the European Union. It requires companies with at least 1,000 employees in Germany, whether they are headquartered in Germany or have operations there — to appoint an in-house human rights specialist and demonstrate a clear process for carrying out supply chain human rights due diligence. This includes screening suppliers for risks related to forced labour, child labour, environmental impact, discrimination, unethical employment and unsafe working conditions. The law not only requires companies to identify and assess these risks but also to prevent and address any adverse impacts.

Furthermore, eligible companies must publish an annual report outlining their approach to risk identification and mitigation.

Non-compliance with the Act can result in harsh financial penalties. These may include fines of up to 2% of the company's average annual global revenue or up to €400,000,000. In addition to this, individuals can be liable to pay up to €800,000 and the company may face a temporary ban on applying for public contracts.

As of 2025, Germany's legislation will be replaced by the EU's version, which was passed by the European Parliament in April 2024.

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	84.5 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.

“The majority of Leonid’s human rights work has — perhaps unsurprisingly — been in Germany. The LkSG has meant that for larger organisations, Human Rights teams rather than a single specialist has been the norm here — with some teams adding as many as 10 people — focusing on supply chain due diligence and risk.”

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)	€90,000 – €140,000
ESG Reporting Manager	€65,000 – €100,000
ESG Reporting Officer	€50,000 – €75,000



SWITZERLAND: ESG OVERVIEW

The ESG framework in Switzerland is both complex and evolving.

Since 2023, Swiss companies with an annual average of at least 500 full-time positions (FTE) across two consecutive years and with a balance sheet equal or greater than CHF 20 million – or revenues in excess of CHF 40 million – must report on environmental, climate, social, labour exploitation, human rights and anti-corruption.

Gender equality is an area where Switzerland leads the way. Equal pay for female and male employees is mandatory and the Gender Equality Act requires employers with 100 or more employees to conduct internal equal pay analysis and communicate the verified results of this analysis internally. Listed companies must additionally publish the results of their findings in their annual financial report.

A landmark case

In April 2024, the European Court of Human Rights delivered three rulings on cases related to climate change. In the case Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and Others v. Switzerland, the Court found violations of Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) and Article 6 (access to court) of the European Convention on Human Rights

(ECHR) for Switzerland's failure to implement sufficient measures to combat climate change. This ruling is the first of its kind, confirming that climate change protection falls within the scope of the ECHR. This case has put Switzerland firmly under the spotlight and the country is now doubling down on its ESG efforts.

In terms of hiring, we have always seen high levels of demand for ESG talent but the evolving regulatory landscape, combined with the current undesirable attention on its climate change policies, has led to a recent surge in recruitment.

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	8.7 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.
- 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.

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.

“Working closely with France and Germany, Switzerland has been hiring Human Rights professionals at a similar rate to their neighbours. These roles are consistently paid above market rate, in line with the broader Swiss labour market. We’ve seen professionals in Southern Germany flock to Swiss roles in Zurich and Basel, as Swiss based businesses look to mitigate the regulatory impact of CS3D.”

Adam Bond
Leonid Group

HUMAN RIGHTS

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (CHF)
Head of Human Rights (VP)	CHF 160,000 – CHF 220,000
Human Rights Specialist / Officer / Manager	CHF 90,000 – CHF 150,000

SUSTAINABILITY

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (CHF)
Chief Sustainability Officer (EVP/SVP)	CHF 175,000 – CHF 325,000
Head of Sustainability / ESG (VP)	CHF 130,000 – CHF 200,000
Senior Sustainability / ESG Manager	CHF 120,000 – CHF 180,000
Sustainability / ESG Manager	CHF 100,000 – CHF 140,000
Sustainability / ESG Officer	CHF 70,000 – CHF 90,000
Sustainability / ESG Analyst	CHF 65,000 – CHF 80,000

ESG REPORTING

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (CHF)
Head of ESG Reporting (VP)	CHF 120,000 – CHF 190,000
ESG Reporting Manager	CHF 85,000 – CHF 120,000
ESG Reporting Officer	CHF 70,000 – CHF 100,000



THE NETHERLANDS: ESG OVERVIEW

ESG is now firmly on the agenda of Dutch boards and ESG governance has become of greater interest to various stakeholder groups. This is exemplified by the 2023 update of the Corporate Governance Code, stipulating that boards have a duty to consider the environmental and societal impact of the company's strategy. This obligation was further underscored with the introduction of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting directive (CSRD), which resulted in greater scrutiny not only for companies, but for ESG governance, from regulators, supervisory authorities and consumers.

As a European Union country, The Netherlands will now be obliged adopt the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), which means that for the first time, The Netherlands will introduce comprehensive mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence obligations, with high financial penalties and reputational damage at stake, for any in-scope companies found to be non-compliant.

Large organisations will also be required to implement a climate transition plan, and to report on their due diligence processes. Companies not in scope but in the value chains of businesses that are in scope will also to some degree be affected, and can expect increasing sustainability-related information requests, contractual requirements and climate-related transition requests.

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 2023. 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	17.6 million
PAYROLL	Monthly
CURRENCY	Swiss Franc (CHF)
VAT	8.1%



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.

“Whilst the German, French and Norwegian laws are leading the way in pushing businesses to hire Human Rights professionals, the Netherlands – whilst not having the same regulatory pressures – has still responded in advance of CS3D, with significant hiring activity.”

Adam Bond
Leonid Group

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

ENorway has always led from the front on ESG matters and has implemented a number of regulations; some acts apply across all industries, whereas others are industry specific. Key cross-industry regulations include the Human Rights Act, the Working Environment Act, the Gender Equality and Discrimination Act, the Act on Biodiversity, the Pollution Control Act, the Company Act, the Penal Code and the Transparency Act.

The Transparency Act

Rather than waiting for the EU to approve the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Act (CS3D), several European countries adopted their own laws in advance, including Norway. The country's Transparency Act — 'Forbrukertilsynet' – entered into force on 1 July 2022. The objective of the Act is to ensure fundamental human rights and the right to decent working conditions, as well as full supply chain transparency, enabling consumers to make informed decisions.

As is the case in other parts of Europe, Norway's ESG approach has been driven by society, where there was a strong consumer push for clearer information on products and supply chain activities. The Transparency Act was also supported by larger corporations, including Hydro and Equinor, which advocated for tougher legislation to minimise risk in supply chains and for levelling the playing field.

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	5.4 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.

“The Transparency Act – Forbrukertilsynet was one of the first major supply chain acts affecting businesses in the EU. In the Norwegian market, we see roles that require a deep understanding of this regulation and its implications from a business standpoint.”

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 1,400,000 – NOK 2,500,000
Head of Sustainability / ESG (VP)	NOK 1,000,000 – NOK 1,600,000
Senior Sustainability / ESG Manager	NOK 800,000 – NOK 1,200,000
Sustainability / ESG Manager	NOK 600,000 – NOK 900,000
Sustainability / ESG Officer	NOK 450,000 – NOK 800,000
Sustainability / ESG Analyst	NOK 400,000 – NOK 700,000

ESG REPORTING

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (NOK)
Head of ESG Reporting (VP)	NOK 900,000 – NOK 1,400,000
ESG Reporting Manager	NOK 600,000 – NOK 900,000
ESG Reporting Officer	NOK 450,000 – NOK 700,000



SOUTH KOREA: ESG OVERVIEW

In South Korea, discussions related to environmental, social and governance issues really only came to the fore around 4 years ago.

In January 2021, The Financial Services Commission of South Korea announced a phased introduction of mandatory ESG disclosure requirements, commencing in 2025.

However, due to concerns that many companies don't yet have the right infrastructure and expertise in place to meet the International Financial Reporting Standards sustainability disclosure standard, the commission decided to delay the mandatory ESG disclosure requirements by one year, and it will now come into force in 2026.

The Financial Services Commission has been clear that it intends to formulate domestic ESG disclosure standards based on the benchmarks which have been set by other countries and jurisdictions. As such, forward-thinking companies are already putting measures in place to meet these requirements.

Moreover, there has been a major trend towards large corporations making ESG a board-level matter.

Carbon Neutrality and Greenwashing

In March 2022, the Framework Act on Carbon Neutrality and Green Growth for Coping with Climate Crisis came into force. This pivotal legislation sets an interim goal of reducing national greenhouse gas emissions by at least 35% from the levels observed in 2018, to be achieved by 2030.

Additionally, this legislation stipulates that large businesses must conduct climate change impact assessments for major national plans and development projects.

In April, the government finalised the First National Basic Plan for Carbon Neutrality and Green Growth for 2023–2042 in accordance with the act, setting annual and sector-specific reduction targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030.

Meanwhile, the government has taken stringent measures to combat greenwashing. According to statistical data by the Ministry of Environment, a total of 4,940 cases of greenwashing were identified during the three-year span from 2020 to 2022. Companies now found in breach of governmental guidelines on labelling and advertising could find themselves facing heavy fines.

SOUTH KOREA

South Korea, officially known as the Republic of Korea (ROK), is a highly developed country, with a GDP of USD\$1.674 trillion as of 2022.

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.

“Watch this space. The South Korean government as currently reviewing new legislation that broadly mirrors CS3D in the EU. As a large trading pillar of Asia, this will push its economic neighbours to adopt human rights strategies as well.”

Adam Bond
Leonid Group

HUMAN RIGHTS

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (KRW)
Head of Human Rights (VP)	KRW 140,000,000 – KRW 200,000,000
Human Rights Specialist / Officer / Manager	KRW 60,000,000 – KRW 100,000,000

SUSTAINABILITY

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (KRW)
Chief Sustainability Officer (EVP/SVP)	KRW 150,000,000 – KRW 250,000,000
Head of Sustainability / ESG (VP)	KRW 130,000,000 – KRW 200,000,000
Senior Sustainability / ESG Manager	KRW 100,000,000 – KRW 160,000,000
Sustainability / ESG Manager	KRW 80,000,000 – KRW 110,000,000
Sustainability / ESG Officer	KRW 60,000,000 – KRW 80,000,000
Sustainability / ESG Analyst	KRW 50,000,000 – KRW 70,000,000

ESG REPORTING

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (KRW)
Head of ESG Reporting (VP)	KRW 200,000,000 – KRW 165,000,000
ESG Reporting Manager	KRW 80,000,000 – KRW 130,000,000
ESG Reporting Officer	KRW 75,000,000 – KRW 90,000,000



AUSTRALIA: ESG OVERVIEW

Australian companies and regulatory bodies are increasingly focused on ESG matters.

In the past few years, Australia has started to introduce mandatory ESG-reporting requirements, including those relating to climate risk disclosures for companies. Currently, most ESG disclosures made by Australian companies are on a voluntary basis and in compliance with broad international guidelines.

While Australia has yet to establish a clear and mandatory ESG-reporting regime, emphasis on ESG is growing as investors are making it clear they expect companies to commit to ESG principles.

In the 2021 Global Policy Survey on Climate published by Institutional Shareholder Services, 88% of international investor respondents and 75% of international non-investor respondents indicated that they expect companies to provide clear and appropriately detailed disclosure of climate change governance, strategy, risk mitigation efforts and targets.

Political Debate

Despite this growing emphasis on ESG, there are those — predominantly from the political right — who ideologically oppose the concept of ESG and believe things have gone too far.

Allegations of “woke capital” are regularly cast by opponents who view ESG matters as a costly distraction from investor returns, service delivery and customer satisfaction.

However, the ideological debate is less heated than in the U.S. With a cross-party agreement in place to net-zero emissions by 2050, all major political groups are broadly aligned with Australia’s corporate and investment communities in recognising that ESG performance is a key investment and corporate differentiator.

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.

“With the mining industry so embedded in the Australian economy, Human Rights and Supply Chain Due Diligence has been a consideration for many years in Australia, given the sector’s history of rigid legislation. The consultancy market has grown massively as a result, with Human Rights a major growth area across many sectors.”

Adam Bond
Leonid Group

HUMAN RIGHTS

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (AUD)
Head of Human Rights (VP)	AUD 150,000 – AUD 220,000
Human Rights Specialist / Officer / Manager	AUD 70,000 – AUD 110,000

SUSTAINABILITY

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (AUD)
Chief Sustainability Officer (EVP/SVP)	AUD 180,000 – AUD 300,000
Head of Sustainability / ESG (VP)	AUD 140,000 – AUD 220,000
Senior Sustainability / ESG Manager	AUD 100,000 – AUD 150,000
Sustainability / ESG Manager	AUD 90,000 – AUD 125,000
Sustainability / ESG Officer	AUD 85,000 – AUD 110,000
Sustainability / ESG Analyst	AUD 70,000 – AUD 100,000

ESG REPORTING

TITLE	SALARY RANGE (AUD)
Head of ESG Reporting (VP)	AUD 120,000 – AUD 180,000
ESG Reporting Manager	AUD 90,000 – AUD 130,000
ESG Reporting Officer	AUD 70,000 – AUD 100,000



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CONCLUSION

2024 has been a transformative year for ESG, sustainability and human rights, with multiple legislation changes and even more on the horizon.

Arguably the most crucial change was the passing of CS3D as law, which has led large businesses across Europe and beyond to re-think their team structures and be fully prepared for what lies ahead.

This year has unsurprisingly seen an uptick in hiring as businesses look to bolster their human rights expertise and get ahead of the competition in the war for talent.

With the landscape changing, demand rising and the talent pool diminishing, employers will benefit from partnering with an experienced and specialised search firm, in order to target sought-after ‘passive’ candidates who might not actively be looking.

At Leonid, we work globally and our consultants only handle a maximum of three roles at any time, to ensure we maximise our time in reaching out to our network and screening potential candidates.

Unlike other search firms, we pledge to fill all open roles within 30 days of instruction, using our [‘Magic Month’](#) methodology.

To find out more, please get in touch with [Adam Bond](#) for a friendly and informal discussion.



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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:

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