

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: THE OECD GUIDELINES AND THE U.S. NATIONAL CONTACT POINT



PHOTO: OECD/BENJAMIN RENOUT



“The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises bring together labor, civil society, and business to create the broadest possible consensus behind them. This is truly the work of a global policy network in action.”

– Hillary Rodham Clinton

WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES?

The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) have served for over 35 years as the only comprehensive corporate social responsibility (CSR) instrument to be formally negotiated and endorsed by governments. The Guidelines are voluntary recommendations to foster sustainable development through responsible business conduct by MNEs.

The focus areas are:

- Information Disclosure
- Human Rights
- Labor
- Environment
- Combating Bribery
- Consumer Interests
- Science and Technology
- Competition
- Due Diligence and Supply Chains

The U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs (EB) is home base for the Guidelines.

THE ROLE OF THE U.S. NATIONAL CONTACT POINT

The United States and the other adhering governments (34 OECD members, plus non-OECD countries Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, Latvia, Lithuania, Morocco, Peru, and Romania) have created national contact points (NCPs) to promote and implement the Guidelines’ recommendations. The U.S. NCP, located in EB, works closely with U.S. businesses, trade unions, civil society, and interagency partners.

The NCP has the following responsibilities:

- Promote awareness of the Guidelines to business, labor, NGOs and other members of civil society, the general public, and the international community.
- Work with other governments’ NCPs, foreign businesses, international labor and civil society organizations, often regarding the business activities of U.S.-incorporated MNEs overseas.
- Offer a forum for confidential discussion between business and stakeholders through:
 - **Proactive Agenda:** Bring business and civil society together to identify potential and emerging CSR-related risks for MNEs and discuss appropriate actions and responses.
 - **Dispute Resolution:** Facilitate dispute resolution, typically in a Specific Instance (complaint) submitted to the NCP by an NGO or other parties against an MNE, regarding allegations of nonobservance of the Guidelines.

The U.S. NCP offers itself as a resource to the business community, civil society, U.S. government agencies and U.S. Embassies around the world. The U.S. NCP is a part of EB’s Corporate Social Responsibility Team, which plays a key role in the Department’s engagement with U.S. business in promoting responsible private sector business practices.

FURTHER INFO:

U.S. NCP: www.state.gov/usncp; usncp@state.gov

OECD Guidelines text:
www.oecd.org/dataoecd/43/29/48004323.pdf

State Department CSR website:
www.state.gov/e/eb/eppd/csr