



Laboratory of Responsible Business
Higher School of Economics

Digest of Responsible Business

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Responsible Business as a Global Trend in Sustainable Development

The BRICS member countries are developing national policies to encourage companies to adopt responsible business practices. India has been implementing a set of measures since 2018, Russia since 2023, and China switched to national regulation of ESG policies at the end of 2024. I think this will expand in the future.

The national Russian rating of responsible business, EPS, was created in 2023 and currently the number of participants exceeds 7 million, which is significantly higher than comparable foreign projects. Since 2024, the Laboratory of Responsible Business of the Center for Fundamental Research of the HSE University (LRB) has been actively involved in the practical organization and conduct of the second stage of the EPS rating of responsible business, verifying the data of participants and awarding additional points for this stage. The laboratory studies and compares current trends in the development of Russian and global responsible business.

Since January 2025, LRB has been publishing a series of digests reviewing current news from Russian and foreign research and practice in the field of responsible business and sustainable development.

The Laboratory of Responsible Business is a scientific and practical unit within the HSE Centre for Basic Research. It was established in 2024 in collaboration with the Mendeleev Institute for Demographic Policy. LRB focuses on the issues of responsible business practices in Russia and abroad, as well as the development of fundamental approaches to understanding the terms of responsible business.

The aim of LRB is to create a scientific, methodological, and practical basis for the comprehensive assessment of business responsibility in light of the national goals and development priorities of Russia, as well as to encourage businesses in achieving these goals.

Main research topics:

- Develop scientifically grounded theoretical and methodological approaches to assessing business responsibility, including conceptual and categorical frameworks and evaluation methods.
- Conduct assessments of entrepreneurial entities to create an EPS-rating of responsible businesses.

Learn more: <https://cfi.hse.ru/lresbus/>



The EPS rating is a comprehensive assessment of the "health" of business entities aimed at determining their level of trustworthiness, social, and environmental responsibility. [add note that EPS is the russian equivalent of ESG and is also referred to as EPS]

The assessment is carried out in two stages (scoring and questioning) based on the methodology of the national standard "Business Reputation Index of Business Entities. Assessment methodology and formation procedure EPS rating of responsible business" (GOST R 71198-2023). All commercial organizations and sole proprietors in Russia—around 7 million—participate in the rating.

Learn more: <https://экр-рейтинг.рф/>

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1. BEST PRACTICES OF EPS RATING LEADERS

ABI PRODUCT JSC



One of Russia's leading manufacturers of convenient and easy-to-prepare food products. It specializes in the production of sausages, frozen semi-finished products and frozen ready meals for a range of customers.

Region Vladimir	Category Large Business
Foundation 1995	Number of employees > 800 people
Type of activity Professional, scientific, and technical activities	Website https://abi.ru/



Ecology

The project "The life of a plastic bottle". Plastic is being collected at all facilities, and educational activities are underway. Plastic is recycled;

The company created a criterion for evaluating packaging suppliers for compliance with recyclability.



State

Training of local staff. The Territory of Marketing project is being implemented jointly with Stoletov Vladimir State University (VISU). Together with the Vladimir College of Economics and Technology (VCET), the first educational program in the field of "Technology of food products of animal origin" has been launched.



People

Reimbursement of the cost of rental housing for employees who do not have their own housing within a radius of 40 km from their place of work;

Free ultrasound diagnostics and consultations with specialists for employees at the Mobile Health Center on the company's territory;

Payments up to 50,000 rubles for the treatment for serious illness;

Special offers in fitness clubs in Vladimir for company employees;

One-time payment at the birth of a child of 4,600 rubles for employees with at least 1 year of work experience.

Donations to Sunday schools, assistance to internally displaced persons;

The "Do good" campaign for children in orphanages.

2. RUSSIAN RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS NEWS



Voronezh Region

[Source](#)

Legislative framework for a sustainable future

An expanded version of the law "On the Development of Responsible Business" was adopted in Voronezh Region. This law establishes the obligation to take into account the results of the EPS rating of companies when making decisions on providing them with state support measures. In addition, the document sets out additional regional criteria, compliance with which will allow companies to receive a wider range of support measures.

Currently, 114 companies in the region meet these criteria and can receive government support.



Kostroma Region

[Source](#)

The Law on support of responsible business is a step towards the sustainable development of the region

On December 12, 2024, Kostroma Regional Duma adopted a law on supporting responsible business. Enterprises that meet the criteria will receive priority in government support, including access to guarantees from the Regional Guarantee Fund, microloans, and subsidies for the purchase of equipment. The law entered into force on January 1, 2025.

More than 23,000 companies and entrepreneurs from the region have already been included in the federal EPS rating.



Vladimir Region

[Source](#)

2/3 of responsible businesses have received support

In the two years since the introduction of the EPS rating, about 2/3 of the companies in Vladimir Region that have been recognized as responsible have received support measures. Governor Alexander Avdeev announced this at the EPS Forum, noting that companies are provided with various forms of assistance, including investment tax deductions and support in the urban development sector.

In the future, the support measures will be expanded, including preferential loans for responsible businesses.

3. INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES

[Source 1](#)[Source 2](#)[Source 3](#)

Financial support for the most successful responsible business practices

The UAE government supports the leaders of national ratings of responsible business through the **CSR UAE Foundation**. This is carried out with the participation of the foundation's main partners, the non-profit organizations **Jood** and **Ma'an**. Top-ranked companies in national ratings of responsible businesses can apply for participation in one of the grant programs. After receiving the Certificate of Social Enterprise, the company becomes part of a large-scale government-supported network of responsible businesses. This grant provides companies with financial support for developing their social projects through government investments, access to educational resources, which help scale their businesses, additional workspaces for employees, and the opportunity to obtain a golden UAE visa.

[Source](#)

Supporting small businesses ensures a stable future

The **Indian Ministry of Small and Medium-Sized Businesses** is implementing the **Zero Defects, Zero Effects (ZED) program**, supporting the most successful practices of responsible business. The program is primarily targeted at SMEs, which constitute a significant proportion of organisations in India. The Ministry's main objective is to support the most successful responsible business practices and increase their international visibility and competitiveness. Under this program, companies are certified at three levels, depending on which, the government provides financial and non-financial support. SMEs owned by women can be certified for free. For leaders who have received the ZED gold certificate, government financial assistance is provided in testing systems and products, access to a simplified taxation system, support for the launch of new sites, and grants for the implementation of ESG initiatives.

[Source 1](#)[Source 2](#)[Source 3](#)

Tools to support sustainable business development

Brazil is integrating tools to support sustainable business development into its economy and business environment, primarily due to its status as a key partner of the OECD and its commitment to membership in this organization, which is a leader in developing business guidelines in the field of responsible business conduct. Brazil's significant involvement in global processes is due to its status as the seventh largest economy in the world. In Brazil, due to the historical features of the development and formation of a work culture, special attention has always been paid to the social component. There is a long tradition in ensuring companies' compliance with national labor legislation, for example, the publication of the "Dirty List" of Slave Labor by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security since 2003. It includes employers who use "conditions similar to slavery." In 2024, a record number of employers were included in the list — 248. Reports of violations can be submitted anonymously, and labor inspectors also conduct regular anti-slave labor inspections. Companies on the list can enter into behavior correction agreements (TACs) or comply with court orders providing for the payment of wages and the adoption of preventive measures. Members of the "dirty list" are denied access to loans from state-owned banks, and may also face loan refusals from private banks. The Institute of the National Pact for the Eradication of Slave Labor (InPACTO), which unites companies and business associations, also obliges member companies to sever ties with companies from the "dirty list" and control their supply chains. Brazil's practice in the field of responsible business conduct is also interesting because it was there that the Business Sustainability Index (ISE B3) was created. The index, launched in 2005, evaluates companies based on their commitment to social responsibility and corporate sustainability. Participation in the index is free of charge, and companies are selected based on responses to a questionnaire, as well as taking into account the CDP-Climate index and the reputation Risk index. In 2024, 187 companies were eligible to participate.

Brazil also has a "green printing program." It operates on a voluntary basis. It was launched in 2024 to standardize and certify Brazilian products and services that meet sustainability criteria. The criteria include the traceability of production, carbon footprint, solid waste, and energy efficiency. The government also plans to launch the "national ESG seal": the proposed draft law (No. 4363/2021) provides for the creation of a national ESG seal for companies investing in ESG projects. Companies that receive the seal will be able to get priority access to resources, improved financing conditions, and priority in government tenders. Finally, the government is discussing an initiative to attract private and public investment in environmental transformation — "The Brazilian Platform for Climate Investment and Environmental Transformation" (BIP). It will focus on sectors such as: natural solutions and bioeconomics, industry and mobility, and energy. These initiatives demonstrate Brazil's commitment to sustainable development and responsible business conduct, which makes the country an interesting opportunity for investors focused on ESG practices.



China

[Source](#)

Government support connects responsible businesses and regions in need of assistance

The government's 10,000 Enterprises Helping 10,000 Villages project is an example of the integration of the private sector and responsible business to purposefully combat poverty throughout China. One of the mechanisms for its implementation is the motivation of firms to attract workers from poor households. In order to receive government funding and investment incentives, enterprises must create industrial investment funds in poor areas, expand their operations in remote regions, and help rural businesses enter the market. All projects concluded in rural areas are recorded in a single register and monitored by the state. Those companies that organize the most significant projects for poor regions and invest more in their development receive bonuses from the state and national awards.



UAE

[Source 1](#)[Source 2](#)[Source 3](#)

Financial encouragement for the implementation of youth programs

The Emirates Foundation, established with the support of the UAE government, has developed several programs to encourage businesses that are actively involved in supporting the rights and opportunities of UAE youth. Three key programs include Takatof, Kafa'at, and Sanid. Each is aimed at various aspects of youth involvement in company activities – professional development, preparation of young people to work in crisis situations, and familiarization with various types of activities through work experience. Analyzing the projects and opportunities that responsible business offers to young people in the UAE, the government issues grants under one of the proposed programs to those companies whose projects have proven to be the most significant and important for the development of young people and preparation for their first job. These programs not only help the government to encourage businesses that are involved in the development of UAE youth, but also to form a generation of socially responsible and proactive leaders.

4. NEW RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS RESEARCH

How open innovation can improve companies' corporate social responsibility performance?

[Source](#)

S Strazzullo, R Mauriello, V Corvello, L Cricelli, M Grimaldi

Business Ethics, the Environment & Responsibility. 2025. Vol. 34. No. 1. P. 1-16.

Open Innovation (OI) allows companies to develop innovative solutions more effectively, with lower costs and risks. The economic benefits of OI have been thoroughly investigated in prior research. More recent literature suggests that OI can help companies also improve their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) performance. Contributions on how open innovation can help companies improve their CSR performance, however, are fragmented and lack strong theoretical foundations.

EPS rating of responsible business as a basis for business reputation assessment

[Source](#)

Kuchmaeva O.V., Niyazmetov A.K.

Standards and quality. January 2025.

President Putin has repeatedly stated the importance of supporting responsible businesses that help their country with concrete actions, implement projects in the social sphere, and protect the environment. In February 2024, in a message to the Federal Assembly, he separately stressed that state support measures should be linked to higher wages, better working conditions and social packages for employees.

Ranking of Russian regions according to the UN SDG indicators for 2024

[Source](#)

MGIMO Center for Sustainable Development (ICSD)

The rating was prepared and presented by the MGIMO Center for Sustainable Development (MRD) (<https://mgimo.ru/about/structure/ucheb-nauch/mcur/>) and the Russian Association for the Promotion of the United Nations (RAS). The methodology includes an analysis of 130 indicators of official Russian national statistics on the 16 UN SDGs. Ranking is a useful tool for analyzing the effectiveness of regional sustainable development strategies. It allows regions to set vectors for further sustainable development and develop plans for social well-being, economic development and transformation in the modern paradigm of national objectives.

5. NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Prospects for the development of responsible business in Russia **Open scientific and practical seminar**

February 13, 2025, 05:00

Moscow, HSE University, Slavyanskaya pl., 4, building 2, office 101

Which business in Russia is the leader according to the national standard of the Business Reputation Index (EPS rating)? How is the national Business Reputation Index (EPS) used by Russian regions to support the most responsible businesses? How can the national EPS rating be useful for finding a promising employer?

Participants

Oleg Y. Krivokhizhin, Head of the Laboratory of Responsible Business at the Center for Fundamental Research of HSE University

Natalia A. Vukovich, Academic Director of the Laboratory of Responsible Business, PhD in Economics, Associate Professor of the Department of World Economics, Faculty of World Economics and World Politics, HSE University

Ekaterina R. Besmertnaya, PhD in Economics, Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Business of the Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation Registration



Responsible business development prospects in China **Open Discussion**

March 13, 2025, Moscow, HSE University, Slavyanskaya pl., 4, building 2, office 101



Moderators

Natalia A. Vukovich, PhD in Economics, Academic Director of the Laboratory of Responsible Business, Associate Professor of the Department of World Economics, Faculty of World Economics and World Politics, HSE University,

Invited experts

Alexandra A. Sizova, PhD in Historical Sciences, Associate Professor, Deputy Head of the School of Oriental Studies, Head of the Scientific and Educational Section of China Studies at the School of Oriental Studies, Faculty of World Economy and World Politics, HSE University

Shah Saud, PhD, School of Management and Economics, Beijing Institute of Technology, China (in English)

Oleg U. Krivokhizhin, Head of the Responsible Business Laboratory at the Center for Fundamental Research, HSE University

Ilya S. Kozylov, Head of the Turn to the East – 2 project, Lecturer at the Department of Foreign Regional Studies, Researcher at the Center for Integrated European and International Studies (CCEMI) / Asia-Pacific Sector, Faculty of World Economics and World Politics, HSE University

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