



# UN Global Compact Communication on Progress

Advokatfirmaet Thommessen AS

5 June, 2020



This is our **Communication on Progress** in implementing the Ten Principles of the **United Nations Global Compact** and supporting broader UN goals.

We welcome feedback on its contents.

## THOMMESSEN

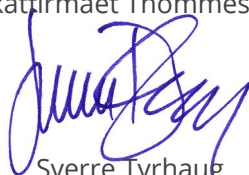
Advokatfirmaet Thommessen AS  
[www.thommessen.no](http://www.thommessen.no)

Oslo  
5 June, 2020

## To our stakeholders

I am pleased to confirm that Advokatfirmaet Thommessen AS reaffirms its support of the Ten Principles of the United Nations Global Compact in the areas of Human Rights, Labour, Environment and Anti-Corruption. In this annual Communication on Progress, we describe our actions to continually improve the integration of the Global Compact and its principles into our business strategy, culture and daily operations. We also commit to sharing this information with our stakeholders using our primary channels of communication.

Yours sincerely,  
Advokatfirmaet Thommessen AS



Sverre Tyrhaug  
Managing Partner

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## Our commitment

At Thommessen, we seek – together with our clients – to shape the business sector of the future and to safeguard corporate values and the rule of law.

A well-functioning business sector is a sustainable business sector. The UN sustainable development goals for 2030 define 17 areas relating to climate and the environment, as well as economic and social affairs, where there is still global scope for improvement. At Thommessen, we have selected four goals where we believe we can contribute the best:

Reaching the sustainable development goals requires businesses to take an active role. As

an advisor to Norwegian and international businesses, we want to contribute to them developing and choosing sound and sustainable solutions. Knowledge is our key resource and is our main contribution to developing a more sustainable business sector. Along with helping our clients attain their objectives, we are also actively pursuing internal measures to become a more sustainable firm ourselves.

We have joined the UN Global Compact to further strengthen our sustainability commitment. Joining the UN Global Compact means that we are doing our utmost to run our business in conformity with ten principles in the areas of and anti-corruption human rights, labour and the environment.



## Ethics, compliance and anti-corruption

An important basis for our services are our own ethical values. At Thommessen, we set the highest standards for ourselves. Therefore, we have established and adopted our own Code of Ethics. We act in an ethical, sustainable and socially responsible manner and comply with all applicable laws and regulations. Thommessen's Code of Ethics shall guide all of us through the main topics of ethical behaviour. It states our values and gives explanations for several situations that may arise.

We are well experienced with advising our clients and business partners on ethical behaviour, and are eager to improve their ethical standards. As legal advisors, we are expected to practise what we preach, and we live and act by the same standards.

Compliance in all areas is important to us, as well as to our clients and business partners. Thommessen as a law firm, is subject to the Money Laundering Act. We have established our own Anti-Money Laundering Procedures, which describe required controls and other actions in detail.

Thommessen opposes corruption in any form. Corruption threatens the rule of law, it undermines all business activities and free competition. Thommessen has established Anti-Corruption Guidelines that provide detailed information about the legal background and examples on how to act in compliance with this.

### ACTIONS PERFORMED

- We have established our own Code of Ethics, Anti-Money Laundering Procedures and Anti-Corruption Guidelines.
- One of our partners is a member of the Norwegian Bar Association's expert group on money laundering.

### PLANS GOING FORWARD

- We aim to review the firm's Code of Ethics.
- We aim to include anti-corruption and ethical behaviour in our standard contracts with business partners and clients.
- We will continue to closely monitor new regulations and establish new procedures in order to ensure compliance.



## Human rights

Thommessen respects and promotes internationally recognized human rights. We always comply with “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights” from the United Nations and with “The European Convention on Human Rights” from the European Union. No exceptions are permitted irrespective of any reason at any time.

We also consider the conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO Conventions).

Thommessen respects the personal dignity, privacy, and personal rights of every individual. No discrimination of any kind, e.g. based on race, ethnic background, culture, religion, age, disability, sexual identity, world view or gender, is tolerated.

We are also committed to being an active partner for our clients in their efforts to ensure respect for human rights.

### ACTIONS PERFORMED

- We are compliant with “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights” from the United Nations and with “The European Convention on Human Rights” from the European Union.
- All employees in Thommessen have the right to give notice of criticism in the workplace. We have established new notification routines to ensure that case management is objective, efficient and neutral.

### PLANS GOING FORWARD

- Continue to respect and promote internationally recognized human rights, both within the firm and towards our clients.



## Diversity

Social diversity is a strategic priority for Thommessen, and we strive to be an attractive workplace and employer for all, irrespective of race, ethnic background, culture, religion, age, disability, sexual identity, world view or gender. Our strategy includes specific targets for increasing the proportion of women among our managing associates and partners. In order to reach these targets, we have introduced a number of measures in relation to recruitment, management training, flexibility for staff with small children, etc.

At Thommessen, we have also recognized the importance of unconscious discrimination (bias). We have, among other things, structured the recruitment process and developed a recruitment tool together with an assessment and talent measurement company, CUT-E, where we evaluate candidates against predefined characteristics identified through various personality and ability tests. Through this process, we reduce unconscious discrimination in the recruitment and selection process.

We have established a designated Women's Committee, which supports the management in its efforts to improve our gender balance and increase retention of female lawyers. The Committee is also charged with facilitating female staff bonding by holding monthly lunches and other professional and social events. The Women's Committee is appointed annually and comprises representatives from both Oslo and Bergen.

We have chosen to prioritize gender balance in our strategy, with specific objectives:

- 50 % female managing associates during 2020. We believe this is crucial to ensure continued organic growth of the number of female partners in the future.
- Ten female partners by the end of 2021.
- As of June 2020, we have seven female partners. Since 1 January 2019 until June 2020, we have included seven partners of which three are women.

In relation to our work with social diversity, we support several NGO's:

- **#ShesGotThis** is an NGO addressing gender stereotypes and unconscious bias. Thommessen is one of its founding partners, and we have assisted #SHESGOTTHIS in a range of legal issues in its start-up phase. The organisation also serves as a key advisor in our efforts to increase our proportion of female managing associates and partners. The founders have also launched *Equality Check*, a community-based platform where employees can leave anonymous reviews about equal opportunity, company culture, work/life balance and the management's commitment to diversity. Thommessen encourages all employees to leave their assessment of Thommessen.
- From January 2020, Thommessen is an official partner of **the Norwegian Women's Football Association**. We wish to take part in developing Norwegian women's football, especially linked to increased professionalism and competence enhancement. At Thommessen, we are committed to highlighting female talents – both in the legal profession and in football. The agreement allows the NORWEGIAN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION to access a learning tool for football players based on VR technology, provided by BE YOUR BEST.

We support the youth organization **Big Enough Global** – a platform for young people who are passionate about making a change. The goal of the organization is to help young people with a multi-cultural background to realize how great their potential is, as well as showing the community that young people need to be accommodated. In addition, they work to carry out projects that will benefit the society. In 2020, the organization will work to increase ethnic diversity in the business community.

### ACTIONS PERFORMED

- Founding partner of #SHESGOTTHIS.
- Encourages all employees to leave their assessment of Thommessen in the *Equality Check* platform.

- Official partner of the NORWEGIAN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION.
- We support the youth organization BIG ENOUGH GLOBAL, that focuses on diversity in their recent project.
- In January 2020, we hosted a panel talk on female lawyers and how to increase the number of female partners and senior lawyers. Over 200 participants from different law firms and in-house legal departments attended.
- We identify female talents annually, and put together a career plan.
- We have our own Women's Committee that works closely with the management to identify challenges, solutions and initiatives that motivate women to choose a career in Thommessen.
- Each year we map the salary level of our employees, to be able to close any potential gender pay gap. The findings are presented to all employees every year. We are happy to say that we did not find a gender pay gap in 2019. Next pay gap analysis will be in June 2020.
- Good leadership is crucial to attracting, developing and retaining our employees in general, and our female talents in particular. All partners and others in key management positions must complete leadership development courses. We are currently offering leadership training for all managing associates.
- We have routines for close follow-up of employees before, during and after parental leave and other leaves of absence in order to work against pipeline leakage and to facilitate flexible career paths.
- We are changing the way we work by educating all employees in project management. This ties the teams closer together and helps to weed out "unnecessary anytime performance".

## PLANS GOING FORWARD

- Increase female representation among the partners and on managing associate and senior associate levels.
- Move from annual employee interviews to quarterly development interviews with a focus on career guidance.
- We are planning a webinar together with BIG ENOUGH GLOBAL on how a multicultural background can be an advantage in the profession as a lawyer.
- Together with BIG ENOUGH GLOBAL we will review our communication towards students and evaluate if we need to communicate differently to attract more applicants with a multicultural background.





## Labour and working environment

Thommessen aims to be a great place to work. That is why we always take our employees seriously and treat them with respect.

Health and safety is an important factor for good work. We encourage our employees to find a fair work/life balance. We assist with a healthy working environment through personally tailored work places, sports and other social events.

We are committed to meeting the health, safety and environmental (HSE) requirements of the Working Environment Act. This involves developing good routines for internal control and development of the company's psychosocial and physical work environment, so that our employees at all times have satisfactory working conditions.

### ACTIONS PERFORMED

- Required HSE course.
- Occupational Health Service and Psychological Assistance.
- Workplace evaluation.
- Reimbursement of training expenses.
- Business activities and measures (corporate sports teams).
- Work environment survey.
- Employee evaluation and employee development.
- Internal hospitalization.
- Work leave/study leave.

### PLANS GOING FORWARD

In the autumn of 2020, we are implementing quarterly "pulse checks" to gain insight into the well-being of our employees.



## Environment

Thommessen contributes to a sustainable society through innovative and targeted legal services. We are concerned that our advice and choice of solutions show consideration for the vulnerability of society, and we actively use our expertise in sustainability and climate risk both in our legal advice and in connection with running our own business.

Thommessen's impact on the environment can be divided into two parts:

1. The impact of our legal advice. We are the "go-to" strategic advisors for businesses seeking assistance in managing both risks and opportunities relating to climate change and other aspects of sustainable development.

By integrating sustainability into our legal advice in all industries and practice areas, we add long-term value for our clients.

2. The impact our business brings directly with the use of resources, pollution and waste as a result of our employees' activity in the working relationship. This influence is limited, but both desirable and fully possible to improve through specific measures. We are taking steps to reduce energy consumption, waste, procurement, transport and paper consumption.

### ACTIONS PERFORMED

- We have established a dedicated team within the firm helping us become more sustainable.
- We have established a multidisciplinary group of lawyers focusing specifically on sustainability and climate risk in our legal advice.
- We have joined the UN GLOBAL COMPACT to further strengthen our sustainability commitment.

- Thommessen is a control member of GREEN DOT NORWAY (*Grønt Punkt Norge*).
- Thommessen's office in Bergen has been certified as "Miljøfyrtårn" since 2008.
- As a measure to reduce paper consumption, we have switched from one-sided to two-sided printing by default. In five months we saved 244,566 printed sheets of paper.
- In 2021, Thommessen will move into a new office building ("VIA"). VIA is classified as a "BREEAM" building (BRE Environmental Assessment Method) and will be certified as "Excellent" under the Norwegian classification BREEAM-NOR.
- We always demand goods and services that involve the lowest possible environmental impact.
- In 2019, we introduced several new measures to improve our selecting sorting of waste.
- We encourage environmental considerations when making work related travels.
- We have arranged several seminars and webinars on sustainability and climate risk to share our knowledge on the topic with Norwegian businesses.

### PLANS GOING FORWARD

- We aim to be a climate neutral law firm by 2023.
- We plan for a certain degree of re-use of existing furniture when the company moves into new premises in 2021.
- Even more focus on digital working methods in order to save the consumption of paper and less work related travelling.
- During 2020, we will establish an environmental account for Thommessen's business.

## Corporate social responsibility

Thommessen takes its social responsibility seriously. Our social involvement is not only reflected in the work we do, but also through the NGOs we support. We support several ambitious CSR and pro bono initiatives with:

- **Sharing Knowledge**  
Knowledge is our key resource and is our main contribution to enabling NGOs to pursue their mission under optimum conditions.
- **Financial Support**  
With financial support, we help NGOs and other initiatives to be able to do their job.
- **Pro Bono Services**  
To contribute to access to legal advice for all for NGOs and other initiatives, we assist with pro bono legal assistance.

Every year, we provide our main CSR partner, **Doctors Without Borders** (*Médécins Sans Frontiers* ("MSF")), with both legal pro bono services and financial support. MSF is a neutral and independent medical aid organisation which saves lives and alleviates suffering in more than seventy countries every year. Thommessen has an ambassador group of committed lawyers who assist MSF with legal advice. Several ambassador group members have deepened their acquaintance with MSF by visiting its head office in Brussels. Thommessen representatives have also accompanied MSF to Lebanon, to observe its essential work in closed camps.



Thommessen contributes to developing tomorrow's lawyers through guidance and teaching in legal subjects. We also contribute to raising competence among today's lawyers by arranging seminars and courses within our expertise areas. Thommessen also has a comprehensive trainee programme and other student programmes for law students who are potential future employees.

### ACTIONS PERFORMED

- We provide MSF with both legal pro bono services and financial support.
- We support social entrepreneurship through LEX MUNDI PRO BONO FOUNDATION. LEX MUNDI is a global network of leading independent law firms, with Thommessen as its exclusive Norwegian member.
- Running trainee programme and other student programmes for law students
- We arrange several seminars with various themes within our expertise areas.
- We contribute to legal and social development through, among other things, having members in the NORWEGIAN BAR ASSOCIATION'S law committee and the women's committee.

### PLANS GOING FORWARD

- Continue to be MSF's main CSR partner.
- Look for other relevant CSR partnerships in order to further strengthen our commitment.