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Press coverage April 2021

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18/04/21 EJIL: Talk!

[Germany: Annalena Berbock is the candidate for Chancellor of the Greens](#)

19/04/21 Euro News

[Germany's Greens name Annalena Baerbock as chancellor candidate](#)

19/04/21 The Guardian

[Η 40χρονη Ανναλένα Μπέρμποκ είναι η πρώτη υποψήφια καγκελάριος στην ιστορία των "Πράσινων" της Γερμανίας](#)

19/04/21 Hellas Journal

[Who is 40-year-old Annalena Burbok running for Chancellor on behalf of the Greens, thinking in a governing coalition](#)

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[Germany's leading parties have chosen candidates for chancellor](#)

20/04/21 Multimedia platform of foreign broadcasting of Ukraine

[Announcements: CFP TAU Workshop for Junior Scholars; Gender and the Lost Private Side of International Law Lecture; BIICL International Trade Law Course](#)

25/04/21 EJIL:Talk!

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[ASOS Calls for Mandatory Human Rights Due Diligence legislation](#)

28/04/21 Just style

[The UK must take the global lead against modern slavery once more](#)

28/04/21 The Times (paid)

[LALIVE PARTNER, NICOLAS OLLIVIER, DISCUSSED THE CONTEMPLATED UK-SWISS BILATERAL AGREEMENT ON FINANCIAL SERVICES AT THE BIICL WEBINAR ON SWISS-UK BILATERAL RELATIONS OUTSIDE EU MEMBERSHIP – ALONGSIDE KEYNOTE SPEAKER, HIS EXCELLENCY MR. ALEXANDRE FASEL, AMBASSADOR OF SWITZERLAND TO THE UNITED KINGDOM.](#)

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Blogs by BIICL staff

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02/04/21 The National

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03/04/21 The Times

[Citizenship and the Rule of Law](#)

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[The Ties that Bind](#)

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The UK must take the global lead against modern slavery once more

Nick Beighton

Wednesday April 28 2021, 9.00am, The Times

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hen it was passed in 2015, the UK's Modern Slavery Act was truly

world-leading. Created with the aim of targeting traffickers and better protecting vulnerable people, for the first time large companies operating in the UK were required to publish information on actions taken to avoid the use of forced labour. As the first piece of legislation introduced globally, it was rightly credited with cementing the UK's position as a frontrunner in combatting modern slavery. Yet, in the ensuing years, that position has started to slip.

The act is commendable for driving a conversation around modern slavery and raising awareness of the issue. Asos has proudly published transparent and detailed Modern Slavery Statements each year, with our fifth out today.

We're committed to tackling the root causes of modern slavery by addressing the impacts of our operations and empowering workers, and it's important to demonstrate to our investors, partners and stakeholders just how seriously we take this issue – by providing them with a clear, regular and comprehensive update on what we're doing to mitigate risks in our supply chain and to support and encourage our brand partners to do the same.

But the difficult reality is a high level of disclosure is largely voluntary and taking meaningful action is easily avoided. The news around the UK fashion manufacturing

industry over the past year makes that all too clear. Aside from reputational and financial concerns, opting not to publish detailed modern slavery statements results in few legal or regulatory repercussions for businesses.

As it stands, companies face no penalties for failing to comply with section 54 of the act, which requires them to publish a Modern Slavery Statement, nor for failing to meaningfully engage on this issue. Businesses may even publish a report stating they have taken no action on modern slavery whatsoever and still comply with the legislation.

It's clear that the Modern Slavery Act needs strengthening. Adopting the recommendations set out in the Transparency in Supply Chains consultation, as the Home Office has done to its credit, is a welcome and much-needed step. It goes some way to bringing the UK in line with countries that have since legislated on modern slavery, following our lead while taking notes from the gaps in our approach.

But just bringing the UK back into line with its peers is not enough. We must go further and introduce new laws to compel businesses to take meaningful actions to prevent modern slavery. The UK must adopt mandatory human rights due diligence legislation.

Companies already have a responsibility to undertake this due diligence under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

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Legislation would make this legally binding by requiring UK companies to report on their efforts to mitigate risk and protect people in supply chains globally. By building a failure to prevent mechanism into this legislation, following the lead of the 2010 Bribery Act and as put forward last year by the British Institute of International and Comparative Law, we can take this further and hold businesses and leaders to account for not doing enough to stop all forms of human rights abuses – including modern slavery – wherever they occur, and in turn ensure that victims have access to justice.

The European Commission is already in the process of drawing up such legislation, targeting companies based in the EU and those selling into the market but based outside it, such as Asos. It suggests an uncomfortable future scenario where some UK businesses will strengthen their human rights due diligence measures and disclosure only to meet EU requirements, even though the UK held a world-leading position in this space just a few years ago.

There are other steps the UK can take to regain its lead on this vital issue. Targeted, sector-specific interventions to address risks would go a long way to tackling entrenched problem areas. In the UK fashion manufacturing industry, we're backing calls by the British Retail Consortium to introduce a UK garment manufacturer licensing scheme.

Beefing up enforcement powers is also critical. Like many others we've advocated for the introduction of a single enforcement body for employment rights, as included in the 2019 Conservative manifesto. We urge the government to bring forward legislation to make this a reality.

These steps, taken together with international action on problems facing UK supply chains further afield, including in China, would help create real change in the fight against modern slavery. Like Asos, many businesses are willing partners in this fight.

The UK must reclaim its position as a world leader on modern slavery, or risk permanently playing catch-up.

Nick Beighton is chief executive of Asos

UK politics