

# Introduction

This book is born out of a desire to provide our students of international business law with a continental perspective on corporate social responsibility (CSR). Our students may come to work for international companies, law firms or non-governmental organizations, for example as business lawyers, attorneys or compliance officers. While many of them start out in the private sector, a number are attracted to the public interest. To prepare them for their future work, we offer in our curriculum a course on CSR for civil lawyers. We invite our students to take stock of the relevant concepts, roles, perspectives, issues and ongoing developments. We show them that CSR takes all kinds of lawyers, and that perspective matters.

We can now offer a course book that follows a continental-European perspective on civil law with case material derived from the practices of multinational corporations, with examples from the Netherlands and elsewhere. The book discusses both contract law and tort law. The composition of the group of authors has made sure other areas of the law and business science are represented in the book as well.

The following three questions will permeate the discussions and debates in the book:

- What are the ongoing developments in the field of CSR?
- How can a lawyer facilitate a corporation and its stakeholders in these developments?
- At what point will social norms turn into hard law?

## *Our audience*

The book is written for entry-level bachelor students of international business law at Leiden Law School. It may prove of value to a wider student audience. In the book, the approach we have chosen is that of a crash course in CSR (Part I); an introduction into the role and perspective of stakeholders, attorneys, policymakers, and public interest lawyers (Part II); followed by contemporary issues that we have called Great Debates: direct parent company liability, corruption and bribery, tax avoidance, integrity in the financial sector, labour, and child labour (Part III). Each chapter is followed by a case with questions often based on news articles. These cases do not contain our views on the companies featuring but serve an educational purpose.

This book is part of a continuous effort of integrating our teaching experiences and research in our course material. We have opted for a 'click-on' model whereby areas of study can easily be added at a later date.

*A word of thanks*

This book is the result of a bold idea that brought together lawyers and people from other disciplines who share a commitment to education. Just about every contributor has been a guest at Leiden Law School, often returning more than once, with stories and insights that are so valuable to our students. We are grateful for their generous contribution of book chapters and the discussions we have had with them.

We wish to thank our students who have given their feedback on the course material during the past five years. A special thanks to our colleague Morshed Mannan for his reflections and review of various chapters. Morshed has brought an international orientation to the project that has proven highly valuable. Finally, a word of thanks to Leiden Law School for granting us the time to see the idea through.

Leiden, 16 May 2017

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