



UMANIUS

Corporate Humanism



1

CIVILIZATION AND HUMANISM

November 2024

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UMANIUS is the journal of the Auren Foundation, which, as part of its founding mission, succinctly addresses topics related to corporate humanism. Its aim is to present, propose means of implementation, disseminate, and encourage the values advocated by civic humanism within private and public enterprises and organizations.

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Conceptual Framework

Civilization and Humanism



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The Royal Spanish Academy defines civilization as the body of customs, knowledge, and arts that characterize a human society, as well as the stage of material, social, cultural, and political advancement typical of more developed societies. Civilization is thus deeply intertwined with human society and the idea of progress.

Civilizations reflect the broadest cultural affiliation available to individuals, fostering a sense of cultural belonging and identity—even when those individuals may come from diverse cultural¹ backgrounds. Despite these differences, civilizations provide common elements that shape shared identities. In this way, civilizations are formed through the intersection of cultural sets, where the dominant traits usually stem from the best-organized cultures.²

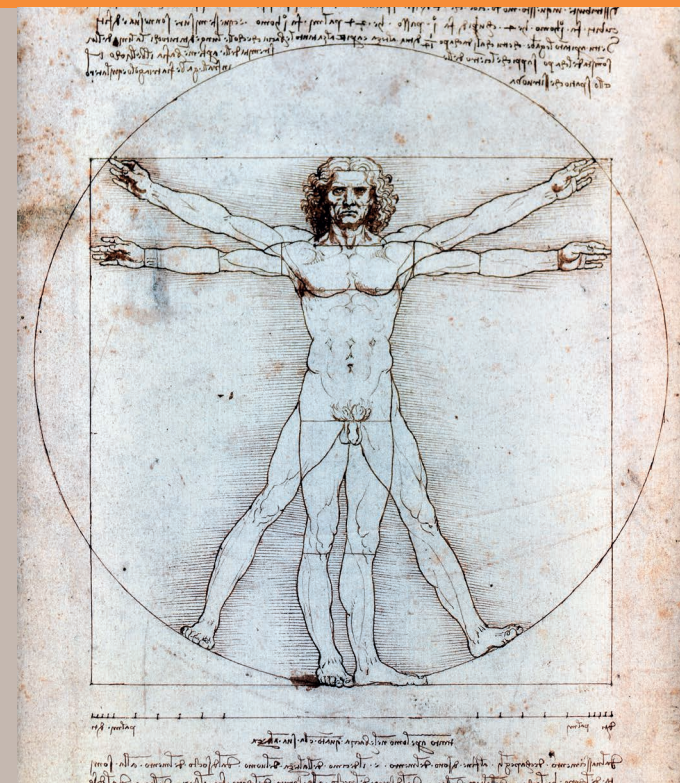
Since the mid-20th century, the evolution of communication technologies, increased cultural exchange, and the global aspiration for material, social, and cultural progress have encouraged the vision of a universal civilization.³ This envisioned global civilization would emerge from the common elements of the world's diverse cultural systems—one built on a humanist foundation that values the beneficial contributions of each culture, while respecting their diversity. Such a vision fosters a global coexistence rooted in a humanistic understanding of society.

¹ Cultural sets encompass collective beliefs, ideologies, institutions, technologies, and even geographic and demographic elements. Cultures are more narrowly defined, focusing on a community's beliefs and ideologies but excluding technological and institutional aspects. See *Political Sociology* by M. Duverger, Ariel Publishing, 1976.

² A detailed analysis of the development and evolution of civilizations can be found in *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* by Yuval Noah Harari, Debate Publishing, 2013.

³ See Samuel P. Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations* (1993), published in *Foreign Affairs* (1996). He outlines nine major civilizations—Sub-Saharan, Latin American, Sinic, Hindu, Buddhist, Japanese, Western, Orthodox, and Islamic—each with distinct values and aspirations, inevitably prone to conflict.

The Vitruvian Man by Leonardo da Vinci symbolizes the connection between humanity and geometry, reflecting the role of proportion in both corporate practice and the advancement of civilization.



The Vitruvian Man by Leonardo da Vinci symbolizes the connection between humanity and geometry, reflecting the role of proportion in both corporate practice and the advancement of civilization.

Title: Vitruvian Man by Leonardo da Vinci

Author: Paris Orlando (own work)

Licensed under: CC BY-SA 4.0

File uploaded: November 9, 2019

Source: Wikipedia. https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hombre_de_Vitruvio

Archive: Vitruvian_Man_by_Leonardo_da_Vinci.jpg



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Within this inclusive framework—aligned with the core values of a universal civilization that upholds responsible progress—humanism emphasizes both the individual and collective worth of human beings. It favors critical thinking over the acceptance of dogma. Broadly speaking, humanism represents an attitude or behavior that elevates humanity through a commitment to freedom and responsible progress.⁴

Contemporary humanism focuses on a rational understanding of the world and is philosophically grounded in civic ethics, shaped by scientific and technological advances. This human-centered worldview is intertwined with the biosphere; it is driven by human well-being and ecological respect, highlighting human dignity, the pursuit of balanced development, and a commitment to fostering conditions that enable these aspirations.

While technological globalization is undeniable, humanistic civilization plays a crucial moderating role, generating essential equilibrium. It helps redefine humanity's relationship with the biosphere, ensuring that technology and human activity are deemed appropriate only if they contribute to societal well-being within ecological boundaries. This inclusive ethos applies to everyone—individuals and institutions alike—and nurtures a virtuous reciprocity shaped by a shared humanist vision. Thus, humanistic civilization, in its pursuit of the common good, supports the responsible sustainability of life on Earth.⁵

Universal human rights, as aspirational principles of humanity, are often enshrined in law and protected through treaties, customary international law, general legal principles, and other sources of international law.⁶ The global legal framework for human rights defines the obligations of governments to act or refrain from acting in ways that either promote or infringe upon the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals or groups. Although human rights can serve as legal sources, only nations that have ratified the International Bill of Human Rights are legally bound to uphold them.

The European Union has a strong commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, both within its borders and internationally. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union enshrines citizens' fundamental rights and is binding upon EU institutions, agencies, and national governments when applying European law.

⁴ The Amsterdam Declaration, unanimously adopted by the General Assembly of the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) at the 2002 World Humanist Congress, outlines the core principles of modern humanism: it is ethical and rational, supports democracy and human rights, links individual freedom with social responsibility, offers a response to dogmatic religions, values artistic creativity and imagination, and promotes transformative cultural expression. Humanism, as a life philosophy, seeks fulfillment through ethical and creative living. It explicitly rejects dogma and does not impose any creed.

⁵ See forecasts from the *Global Biodiversity Assessment Report*, 2019. Available at www.unesco.org.

⁶ The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union consolidates rights previously scattered across various national laws and international treaties—from the Council of Europe, the United Nations, and the International Labour Organization. By making these rights more visible and accessible, the Charter contributes to the development of EU citizenship and the creation of an area of freedom, security, and justice.



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Human Rights

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* is a landmark document adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948, in Paris. It outlines, across 30 articles, the fundamental rights and freedoms to which all individuals are entitled. Three decades later, sufficient international consensus led to the establishment of binding obligations for signatory states through the entry into force of the International Human Rights Covenants. Alongside their optional protocols and the Declaration itself, these instruments constitute what is now known as the *International Bill of Human Rights*.⁷

Today, nine core international treaties form the foundation of the global human rights framework. These include instruments covering civil and political rights, economic and social rights, the fight against racism, the elimination of discrimination against women, the prevention of torture, the protection of children's rights, the rights of migrant workers, the prevention of enforced disappearances, and the rights of persons with disabilities.



Eleanor Roosevelt is widely recognized as the driving force behind the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

⁷ The International Bill of Human Rights includes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and its two optional protocols.
www.un.org/en

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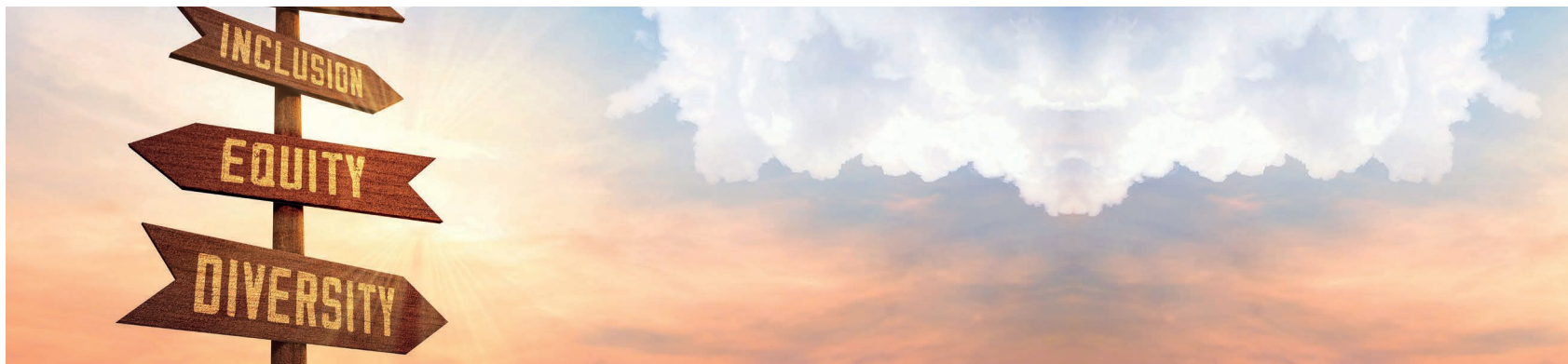
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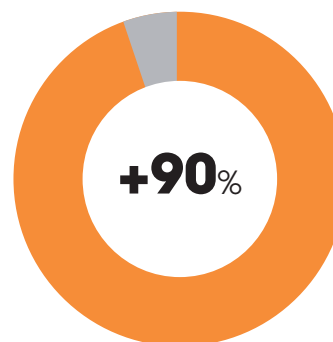


The state of human rights is dynamic and varies widely depending on geographic, political, and social context. Various global issues impact human rights to different extents, including⁸: armed conflict and violence; political repression and restrictions on civil liberties; discrimination and inequality; the rights of women and girls; refugee and migration crises; socioeconomic rights; and civic activism and the broader hope for progress.

The European Union continues to face challenges related to migration and asylum, with documented instances of discrimination and racism, and with the protection of refugees and migrants remaining a central concern. Spain, in particular, has made substantial progress in human rights protection over the years, though key challenges persist—particularly in areas such as asylum and migration, poverty and inequality, gender-based violence and sexual abuse, the right to health, and issues around surveillance and privacy⁹.

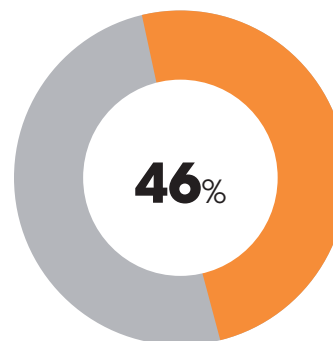
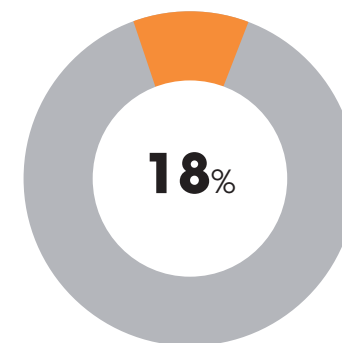
⁸ Human Rights Watch World Report 2023 (www.hrw.org), Amnesty International Report 2022/23 (www.es.amnesty.org), European Union provisions (eur-lex.europa.eu), and the United Nations Global Compact (www.unglobalcompact.org).

⁹ Detailed information can be found at www.hrw.org/es/world-report/2023/country-chapters/spain



Companies Participating in the United Nations Global Compact with Implemented Human Rights Policies.

However, only 18% have conducted human rights impact assessments.



Among companies not aligned with the UN Global Compact, gaps in due diligence are even more pronounced. According to the 2020 Corporate Human Rights Benchmark, 46% of companies assessed scored zero in due diligence-related indicators.



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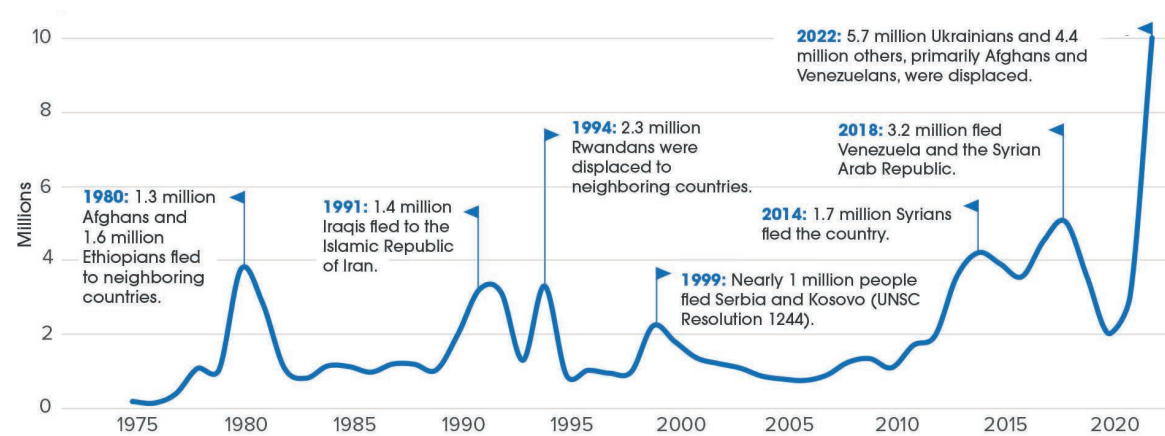


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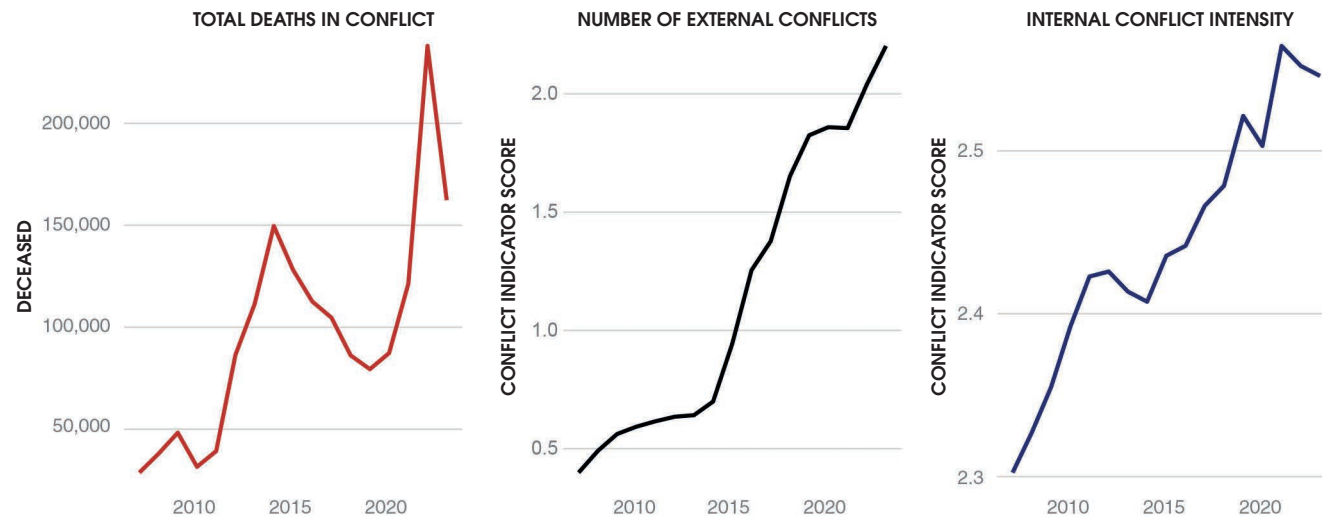
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Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Other Displaced Persons Requiring International Protection, by Year (1975–2022)



Key Indicators of Ongoing Conflicts (2008–2024)



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More than 90% of companies¹⁰ participating in the UN Global Compact report having human rights policies in place. Nevertheless, only 18% report conducting human rights impact assessments. For non-participating companies, the situation is even more concerning: nearly half of all companies assessed in the 2020 Corporate Human Rights Benchmark scored zero on due diligence criteria.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is not possible without bold action on human rights. Over 90% of the 169 SDG targets are directly linked to human rights and labor standards.

According to the UN Global Compact Annual Survey, 72% of participating companies report being committed to implementing the UN's Core Principles. However, 36% cite significant challenges in extending these commitments across their entire supply chain¹¹.

While 66.9% of respondents believe that human rights will become a mainstream consideration for investors, 18% identified a lack of understanding of corporate responsibilities in this domain.



¹⁰ United Nations Global Compact www.unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/our-work/social/human-rights#

¹¹ The proposed EU Directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence and the forthcoming Spanish Law on Human Rights Protection, Sustainability, and Due Diligence will require companies to ensure compliance with their duty to respect and avoid adversely impacting human rights, the environment, and good governance.

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The Role of Business



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- » Businesses must actively seek information and training on global social and geopolitical developments and their implications for human rights. Awareness of the restrictions, risks and challenges surrounding the advancement and protection of these rights, especially within a socio-economic and corporate context, is essential.
- » Ensuring respect for the principles of fundamental human rights in all business activities, with special attention to those most directly connected to the business environment.



- » Incorporating relevant metrics into corporate management systems and including indicators and commitments in public disclosures.
- » Promoting actions that advance the UN Sustainable Development Goals and committing to related initiatives, such as the UN Global Compact.
- » Engaging in forums on Economic and Business Humanism and similar platforms for dialogue and collaboration.



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Purpose-Driven Narratives

The Bridge of Rights



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In the corridors of the Western multinational corporation World Global, voices intersect and blend. In the boardroom, executives gather to discuss the next major investment. Grey suits, silk ties. Laptops gleam like digital fireflies. But this is no ordinary investment. It represents a leap into an entirely different culture. A world map hangs on the wall, with pins marking the company's global locations. One pin stands out—marking a country rich in cultural heritage, with unique traditions, rules, and sensitivities. The economic and financial forecasts for the Expansion Plan are exceptionally promising. Substantial profits are anticipated.

The executives understand they must immerse themselves in the local culture—learning to bow in greeting, to drink hot tea during meetings, to respect sacred rituals. Still, clashes seem inevitable. Western values will collide with deeply rooted customs. Efficiency will confront social etiquette. Planned profitability will require a deep respect for indigenous values. Something beyond mere cultural awareness is needed.

During the meeting, the Vice President of Marketing raises a set of pressing concerns he's been reflecting on: what challenges truly lie ahead when investing in a culture so different from our own? The room falls silent. Among all the executives, he is the most internationally experienced, and so they listen closely as he elaborates:

– Will we truly understand the values of local managers and employees? How will we avoid misunderstandings? How do we build trust when even communication styles and rhythms differ? How do we ensure respect for such vastly different cultural paradigms?

His words stir unease. He has highlighted aspects of the investment that had not yet been fully explored or confronted. The

meeting ends without addressing the business plan that was supposed to be the day's main focus—a plan to which many resources have already been allocated.

A week later, the executives reconvene at the heart of World Global. They recognize they face a real dilemma. Expanding into a culturally distinct environment feels like stepping onto an invisible bridge. How do they cross without falling into the abyss? Amid the discussion, one executive brings up the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

– Could this be our link? he asks. Could it serve as the bridge that connects our differences?

The Declaration emerges as a guiding light: a foundation of universal values adaptable to the cultural realities of their new venture. The executives examine it closely, drawing connections to the United Nations Global Compact, to which World Global is a



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signatory. They conclude that if they continue aligning their policies with human rights principles—not just to integrate cultural values, but also to foster responsible progress in the communities they engage—there should be no insurmountable obstacles.

Their conclusion is clear: the new investment presents an opportunity to extend the company's humanist principles. This will not only facilitate integration and improve reputation but also enhance long-term profitability. The Expansion Plan must now incorporate concrete measures that highlight the company's core values—especially those relevant to the local context. Dignity, freedom of expression, equality, worker and supplier well-being,

responsible development, and environmental stewardship must remain central pillars of corporate action, even in these new markets. These policies are to be robust and enduring. A positive decision is reached.

Thus, World Global begins to build its Bridge of Rights in this distant corner of the world. Among the executives, there is a shared conviction: by embracing the challenge of cultural difference through corporate humanism, they may discover more than the success they had planned—they may uncover a path to mutual understanding and shared prosperity.



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Inspirational Quotes



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"Civilization is the refinement of the spirit, respect for others, tolerance of differing opinions, and the gentleness of customs."

VICENTE BLASCO IBÁÑEZ

"Schools are the foundation of civilization."

DOMINGO FAUSTINO SARMIENTO

"The components of well-being today are not achievements of the right or the left, but of civilization itself."

FERNANDO SAVATER

"If European civilization were to collapse, as it did in Greece, the resulting intellectual desolation would be just as profound."

ALBERT EINSTEIN

"The market is not a capitalist invention. It has always existed. It is an invention of civilization."

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV

"Danger is inherent to the future. The most notable advances of civilization are often processes that nearly destroy the societies in which they occur."

ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD

"There is no hope for a civilization when the masses support harmful policies."

LUDWIG HEINRICH EDLER VON MISES

"It is by no means a frivolous task to define what it means to be human."

PRIMO LEVI



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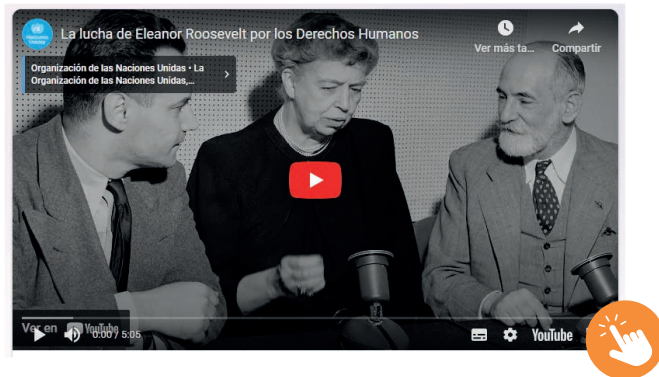
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Eleanor Roosevelt's Fight for Human Rights.



Yuval Noah Harari interviewed by Iñaki Gabilondo (Part 1/2 and 2/2)



Reuters Editor-in-Chief interviews António Guterres in New York.



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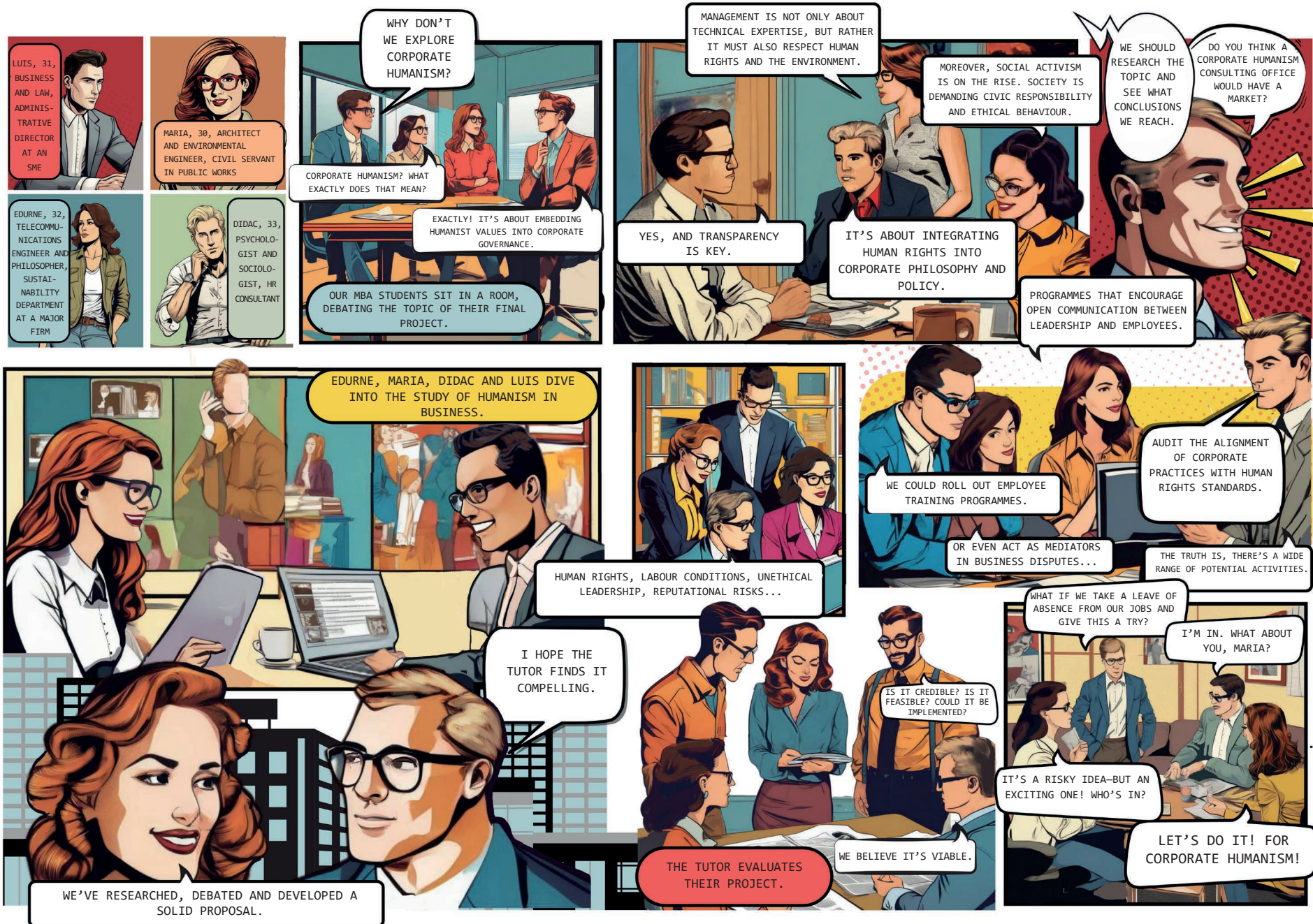
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UMANIUS is published thanks to the generous collaboration of current and former Auren professionals, who voluntarily contributed to the development, design, and layout of the content.

Illustrations for the comic page are by Roberto Catalá Nacher.

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