



VINCI

Pauline Lecoursonnois

Natacha Dimitrijevic

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Social

VINCI is an engineering and construction group with two business segments: concessions, which mainly focuses on toll roads and airports, and contracting, split across activities related to construction, roads and energy.

Background

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO)¹, construction is one of the industries most likely to have forced labour practices. To give an example, in Qatar, large construction projects were initiated in 2010 after the country won the bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup. In 2014 the ILO filed a complaint concerning Qatar's non-observance of the 1930 Forced Labour Convention and the 1947 Labour Inspection Convention. As VINCI had been involved in the Qatari construction sector for many years, through Qatari Diar VINCI Construction (QDVC) – a joint venture with the real estate arm of Qatar's sovereign wealth fund – it was therefore identified as one of the companies exposed to a high risk of complicity with regard to potential labour and human rights abuses.

Our engagement

In 2014, we wrote to the chair/CEO of VINCI to raise our concerns about the alleged violations of human rights and labour standards with regard to migrant workers in Qatar. We also had a number of meetings with the chair/CEO, the sustainability team, and the director of social innovation and human rights. As part of our engagement with VINCI, we asked the company to review its policies and improve its practices in these areas. We also highlighted the importance for the company to demonstrate leadership within the industry and to improve its communication about how it meets its duty to respect human rights in order to keep its social licence to operate.

Changes at the company

VINCI created a global task force of human rights directors, appointed an independent third-party firm to conduct a human rights impact assessment and organised a workshop on modern slavery at the subsidiary level of the business. This work led to the publication of a guide on human rights in 2017, with a more comprehensive version of this publication for employees

most likely to have to manage human rights and modern slavery risks in the course of a project. In 2017, VINCI also signed an agreement² with QDVC and the union federation BWI. The agreement covers the human rights of QDVC workers employed in the country and includes due diligence on its sub-contractors. This agreement is the first of its kind in Qatar between a union federation and a Qatari company. In an acknowledgement of the important steps taken by the government of Qatar regarding the labour standards for migrant labour, in November 2017 the ILO closed its complaint against Qatar. The ILO started a three-year cooperation programme with the State of Qatar in April 2018 in order to improve working conditions and labour rights in the country, and QDVC was selected to conduct a year-long pilot project with the ILO on fair recruitment between Bangladesh and Qatar. This will involve an independent audit of the recruitment and employment practices of the company and its supply chain; an impact assessment study of the positive effects on the workforce; and a series of workshops to share good practice with the rest of the sector.

We believe that VINCI's efforts to improve its standards are commendable. However, business-related human rights abuses are endemic within the global economy. For any business, therefore, preventing and addressing human rights violations is an ongoing process, which requires continuous improvement.

¹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_575479.pdf

² [https://www.vinci.com/commun/communiqués.nsf/04438CA8C4A62422C12581DF00384D96/\\$file/Accord-cadre-En.pdf](https://www.vinci.com/commun/communiqués.nsf/04438CA8C4A62422C12581DF00384D96/$file/Accord-cadre-En.pdf)