

Reading Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 socio-legally

Section 54: 'Transparency in Supply Chains Etc.' was introduced as part of the UK's Modern Slavery Act (MSA) on 26 March 2015. The provision requires commercial organisations operating in the UK, regardless of where they might be incorporated, with an annual turnover of more than £36 million a year, to publish statements disclosing the steps they have taken to prevent modern slavery in their supply chains or to state that the organisation has taken no such steps. Despite its light-touch enforcement mechanisms and apparent aberration from the usual command and control style regulations, section 54 has been a breakthrough in raising awareness of exploitation in global supply chains. Reading this provision socio-legally requires engagement with the political and legal context which gave rise to it. Examination of the law's evolution in practice, allows us to critically examine our own assumptions of law and benefit from empirical findings, which may be surprising and unexpected. In this way, we may consider how practice generates meaning, which ultimately shapes the development of the law and the lives of those subject to it.