



Office directive

Date: 31 October 2025

Ethics in the Office

Purpose and scope

1. Service with the International Labour Office is governed by the highest standards of conduct and integrity, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Charter.
2. Strict adherence to ethical standards by all ILO staff members is fundamental to fostering a culture of integrity and respect within the Office, safeguarding its reputation, and upholding the trust that the International Labour Organization must inspire among its Member States, workers' and employers' organizations and the public at large. These standards are further detailed in:
 - (a) Chapter I of the ILO Staff Regulations;
 - (b) the Financial Rules and the Financial Regulations of the ILO;
 - (c) the [Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service issued by the International Civil Service Commission \(ICSC\)](#);
 - (d) the Principles of Conduct for Staff of the International Labour Office;¹
 - (e) Office Directive, *Rules governing outside activities and occupations*, IGDS No. 71;
 - (f) Office Guideline, *Conflicts of interest*, IGDS No. 68;
 - (g) Collective Agreement on Anti-harassment Policy and Investigation Procedure between the International Labour Office and the ILO Staff Union, 28 November 2014;
 - (h) Office Directive, *Employment of domestic workers by ILO officials*, IGDS No. 479;
 - (i) Office Directive, *Policy against fraudulent and other proscribed practices*, IGDS No. 69;
 - (j) Office Guideline, *Gifts and hospitality offered to officials by external sources*, IGDS No. 552;

¹ See [Ethics Officer website](#).

- (k) Office Directive, *Register of financial interests and related party disclosures*, IGDS No. 116 and Office Procedure, *Register of financial interests and related party disclosures*, IGDS No. 117.
- 3. The Directive is issued pursuant to article 8 of the Constitution of the ILO, article 30 of the ILO Financial Regulations and article 1.2 of the ILO Staff Regulations. It supersedes the Office Directive, *Ethics in the Office*, IGDS No. 76 (version 2), of 11 November 2019.
- 4. The Directive is to be read in conjunction with Office Directive, *Reporting misconduct and protection from retaliation*, IGDS No. 551.
- 5. The Directive applies to all ILO staff members, irrespective of service category, source of funding or type of contract.
- 6. This Directive is effective as of the date of issue.

Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service

- 7. The Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, issued by the ICSC, complement the provisions of Chapter I of the ILO Staff Regulations and provide guidance to ILO staff members both in the performance of their duties and in their activities outside the scope of those duties.
- 8. All staff members are expected to respect and strictly comply with the Standards of Conduct. A copy of the document is provided to each staff member upon initial appointment. Staff members are required to sign a statement confirming that they have read the document and undertake to adhere to the standards it contains. The signed statement is then placed in each staff member's personal file.
- 9. Staff members are also encouraged to consult the Principles of Conduct for Staff of the International Labour Office, a tool developed and regularly updated by the Ethics Officer. This resource is designed to help staff under all type of contracts to identify ethical issues that may arise in various situations and respond to them appropriately. Managers at all levels are responsible for ensuring that their team members are familiar with the Principles of Conduct and for actively promoting adherence to them.

Duty to disclose interests

- 10. Conflicts of interest arise when staff members have an actual, potential or perceived direct or indirect interest that competes with, or could appear to influence, the impartial performance of their duties; or that could interfere with the activities or interests of the ILO. Such interest may call into question the integrity, independence or impartiality of the staff member, or compromise the image or interests of the Organization. Conflicts of interest also include situations in which a staff member, directly or indirectly, benefits improperly, or allows a third party to benefit improperly, from their association with the Organization.
- 11. For instance, conflicts of interest may arise when staff members' personal relationships, outside activities or position in external entities compromise, or appear to compromise, their loyalty and allegiance to the ILO, or their objectivity and impartiality in the performance of their official duties. This may result, for example, from their participation in bodies or groups addressing ILO-related matters, or close personal ties with constituents. Furthermore, financial interests, whether of staff members or their close relatives, together with gifts, benefits and hospitality received from external sources, or involvement in business ventures such as

partnerships or family businesses, are other common sources of conflicts of interest in a public administration.

12. Staff members who are confronted with an actual or potential conflict of interest, or with a situation that could give rise to the perception of such a conflict, must disclose the matter in writing to their immediate supervisor. Together, they should take appropriate steps to resolve the situation in a manner that protects the best interests of the Office.² Failure to disclose a conflict of interest or a situation that could reasonably be perceived as such, may constitute misconduct and result in disciplinary action.

The ethics function

13. The ethics function is a core component of the ILO's accountability framework. The Ethics Officer provides an independent and confidential channel where staff can seek guidance on ethical matters. In promoting a culture of integrity and respect across the Office, the ethics function is entrusted with the following responsibilities:
 - (a) On request, to counsel managers and staff members on questions of ethics, including conflicts of interest, outside activities and occupations, and gifts.
 - (b) To monitor ethics at the ILO, including through staff ethics surveys and meetings with stakeholders and advise on ethics matters within its mandate.
 - (c) To provide guidance to HRD and other relevant ILO units to ensure that ILO policies, procedures and practices reinforce and promote the ethical standards called for under the Staff Regulations and the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, and that the ethical standards pertaining to staff members are clearly understood.
 - (d) To assist, in collaboration with HRD and other relevant ILO units, in designing, promoting and implementing programmes to inform and educate staff with a view to increasing awareness on ethical issues.
 - (e) To receive and review requests for protection from retaliation, or threats of retaliation, from individual staff members who believe that action has been taken against them because they have reported misconduct or cooperated in good faith with an audit or investigation, as set out in Office Directive, *Reporting misconduct and protection from retaliation*, IGDS No. 551.
 - (f) To receive information regarding allegations of the inappropriate treatment by staff members of domestic workers employed by them, as set out in Office Directive, *Employment of domestic workers by ILO officials*, IGDS No. 479.
 - (g) To research and promote ethical intelligence and organizational values, and facilitate initiatives to foster a working environment that upholds ILO values and the principles underlying international labour standards.
 - (h) To represent the ILO in international ethics forums, such as Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations.
14. In exercising the responsibilities of the ethics function, the staff member appointed as Ethics Officer is independent of all other staff members, departments, and organizational entities of the ILO, and reports directly to the Director-General, to whom the Ethics Officer submits an

² See Office Guideline, *Conflicts of interest*, IGDS No. 68.

annual report. The annual report is also submitted to the ILO Governing Body and made publicly available at: www.ilo.org/ethics.

15. All offices and staff members shall cooperate fully with the Ethics Officer and provide access to any records or documents requested, except for medical records which may only be accessed with the express consent of the staff member concerned and other records that are subject to confidentiality requirements.
16. The Ethics Officer has unrestricted and confidential access to the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee of the International Labour Office , and vice versa. ³
17. The Ethics Officer, or any other staff member of the Ethics Office, shall not be compelled by any ILO staff member or body to disclose matters or information brought to their attention in the course of performing their duties within the Ethics Office.
18. The Office requires all staff members to complete two online ethics courses: an initial course, and a refresher every three years. Both courses are accessible to staff through ILO People.
19. The Ethics Officer can be contacted by email at ethics@ilo.org, by telephone at +41 (22) 799 7268, in person at headquarters office 9-54, or through the ILO Integrity Hotline. Staff members should provide all relevant information and documentation in support of their request. Further information on the ILO Ethics Office is available on its website.

Gilbert F. Houngbo
Director-General

³ Terms of reference for the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee of the International Labour Office, para. 5, available at: <https://www.ilo.org/pubic/english/edmas/ioac/index.htm>.