

► ILO programme to provide companies with expert advice on the realization of international labour standards and the MNE Declaration (ILO Helpdesk for Business)

Report for January 2025 – December 2025

Multinational Enterprises and Responsible Business Conduct Unit

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► Introduction

The ILO Helpdesk for Business was established by the Governing Body in 2009 to provide expert advice and guidance on the application of the principles contained in international labour standards to company operations. With the 2017 update of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, the Helpdesk became one of the operational tools and the Office encourages constituents to use the Helpdesk as part of the promotional activities of the MNE Declaration.

The Helpdesk is composed of two services: a free and confidential service that responds to individual requests; and a website which is a one-stop-shop for information, practical tools and upcoming training opportunities that are relevant to companies. Individual requests which may be of interest to other users are anonymized and posted on the website Q&A, along with ILO tools, resources and information on upcoming training opportunities. The Office updates the web site regularly. The Helpdesk website is available in English, French and Spanish; mirror sites exist in Japanese and Chinese.

The Helpdesk is promoted on the [homepage of the ILO website](#) and several thematic and department pages. The ILO International Training Centre also promotes the Helpdesk and uses relevant Q&A in trainings as a basis for stimulating discussion on real-world situations. The promotional leaflet of the ILO Helpdesk exists in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese and is widely distributed to ILO constituents and partners. Various development cooperation projects also promote the Helpdesk through their activities and supported the translation of the promotional materials including in Lao, Malagasy, Malay, Mongolian and Vietnamese. And the Office promotes the Helpdesk at all relevant events where ILO participates, including the Global Forum on Business and Human Rights and related regional forums and the World Investment Conference.

As part of a larger office effort to explore ways to use AI to improve efficiency, the Office piloted in 2025 an AI assistant to enhance the user experience of the Helpdesk and support the Helpdesk manager is preparing responses to questions received. The objective was to integrate the AI assistant with all official ILO databases, including NORMLEX, tools and other resources which might be relevant to companies. The pilot showed that a wide variation in the complexity of issues raised, types of users, terminology used across jurisdictions and sectors, and nuance required to answer many questions resulted in an unacceptably high number of questions being either inaccurate or incomplete. The small pilot demonstrated that there was some potential, but it would require significant resources to adequately train and maintain the AI assistant to attain a sufficiently high degree of confidence in the accuracy. Given the financial and human resources required to adequately train an AI assistant, further development was put on hold. However, the Office will continue to explore possibilities for using AI to assist the manager of the Helpdesk in preparing draft replies, to minimize the burden on other colleagues; and the possibility of securing extra-budgetary resources to further train the AI assistant.

► I. Individual assistance service

A. Number of queries and users

The largest groups of users of the individual assistance service are companies, workers and their representatives and CSR/RBC initiatives (industry and multi-stakeholder). However, the Helpdesk has also assisted other groups, in particular inter-governmental organizations (mainly those concerned with trade, development and human rights), government agencies (concerning, e.g., development aid, procurement, export promotion, import requirements, CSR/RBC policies and national action plans on business and human rights) and employers' organizations. Other users include NGOs, journalists, consultants, and academic researchers.

The Helpdesk answered 2263 individual queries since its establishment in 2009 through December 2025. During the period January – December 2025, the Helpdesk answered 186 receivable requests. This is slightly down from 195 requests in 2024 but continues to exceed the yearly average of 147 across all years of operation.

The dominant group of users remain overwhelmingly MNEs (143 out of 186 questions or 77%). Other significant groups of users included governmental organizations (11) such as national helpdesks which support companies on human rights due diligence issues and OECD National Contact Points, as well as inter-governmental organizations (10). Table 1 provides a breakdown of users.

► **Table 1: Breakdown of users by type**

	January-December 2025	Cumulative total as of December 2025
Workers or Trade Unions	12	196
Employers' organizations	0	3
Governments	11	141
Inter-governmental	10	54
CSR/RBC Initiatives	8	94
MNEs	143	1704
SMEs	0	27
Suppliers	0	38
Researchers/journalists	1	109
NGOs	1	29
Unknown	0	80
Total	186	2263

B. Regional origin of the users

Of the questions that contained information that allows for identification of the region of the user, the most came from Western Europe, followed by East Asia, Middle East, Eastern Europe, Africa and North America. Table 2 provides a breakdown of users by region.

► **Table 2: Breakdown of users by region**

	January-December 2025	Cumulative total as of December 2025
Africa	5	104
Pacific	0	18
Caribbean	0	21
Central Asia	0	83
East Asia	8	168
Eastern Europe	4	50
Latin America	0	131
Middle East	5	89
North America	3	58
Western Europe	20	654
International	45	673

C. Regional focus of questions received

During this period, the large majority of questions pertained to global operations, continuing the trend of the past years. Among the regions of interest East Asia and Eastern Europe were the most common. Table 3 provides a breakdown of regions identified in the queries.

► **Table 3: Regional focus of queries**

	January-December 2025	Cumulative total as of December 2025
Africa	4	149
Caribbean	0	28
Central Asia	7	159
East Asia	13	220
Eastern Europe	13	84
Latin America	3	149
Middle East	5	142

North America	6	28
Western Europe	3	116
Global/unspecified	141	1057

D. Sectors covered in the queries

Table 4 indicates which sectors were specified in queries. Agriculture and extractives were once again the two sectors most frequently specified in the questions. However, the majority of the questions was not sector specific.

► **Table 4: Sectors concerned**

	January-December 2025	Cumulative total as of December 2025
Agriculture	17	147
Artisanal	0	4
Biofuels	0	13
Chemicals	0	36
Construction	8	84
Electronics	3	91
Extractives	19	40
Finance	4	9
Food	1	39
Forestry	3	6
Garments and textiles	3	62
Health services	3	40
Heavy manufacturing	4	55
ITC	2	39
Light manufacturing	5	94
Pharmaceuticals	0	14
Printing/Publishing	0	4
Public services	0	83
Retail	0	34
Services	8	91
Shipping	3	48
Utilities	0	6

Not specified	103	831
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E. Issues raised in the queries

Table 5 provides a breakdown of the issues raised in the queries during this reporting period. The top issues raised included hours of work, a safe and healthy working environment, non-discrimination, forced labour, and wages (mainly ILO's approach to living wages). There were 5 issues which arose from social audits.

► **Table 5: Breakdown of questions by area of MNE Declaration**

Area of MNE Declaration	Topic	January - December 2025	Total as of December 2025
General	Compliance with national law	1	65
	Compliance with principles of ILS	1	81
	Definitions	3	54
	FPRW	1	43
	ILO approach to CSR/RBC	0	27
Employment	Child labour	6	155
	Forced labour	17	175
	Employment promotion	3	25
	Formality	1	10
	Non-discrimination	18	126
	Termination of employment	7	103
	Employment Relationship	3	13
	Other	0	45
Training	Skills and training	6	25
Conditions of work and life	General	0	16
	HIV/AIDS	0	5
	Hours of work	30	162
	Housing/Food	5	28
	OSH	23	153
	Paid leave	0	23
	Privacy	2	13
	Social security	3	47

	Wages	16	151
Industrial relations	Collective bargaining	3	49
	Freedom of association	1	47
	Social dialogue	1	13
Other	Migrant workers	14	154
	Special categories of workers	0	70
	ILS and productivity	2	9
	ILO approach to sustainable enterprises	1	7
	Interpretation procedure	0	3
	Helpdesk operations	2	20
	Requests for collaboration	3	36
	Company Union Dialogue	2	6
	Statistical information	12	107
	Miscellaneous	10	150
	MNE Declaration as an instrument	0	20

In addition to specific questions, the Helpdesk has received a growing number of requests for presentations. These are either of a general nature (e.g., what is the ILO approach to responsible business conduct) or on particular topics. The table below presents the number and origin of these requests.

► **Table 6: Presentation requests**

Type of Organization	2024	2025	Total
Company	4	5	9
Financial institution	1	3	4
Multi-stakeholder initiative	3	3	6
Industry initiative	2	2	4
International organization	5	5	10
Business School	5	3	8
Government	1	0	1
Development cooperation project	5	4	9
National Governmental Helpdesk	0	2	2
Total	26	27	53

► II. ILO Helpdesk for Business Website

The ILO Helpdesk for Business has used Google Analytics to obtain numbers on the Helpdesk website use since the website was launched in 2010. Due to macro-level changes in Google Search, the data provided by Google Analytics do no longer allow for a meaningful year-on-year comparison of web user data for the ILO Helpdesk for Business website between calendar years 2025 and the previous years (since 2010).

These changes, combined with the increasing use of AI-powered tools that provide direct answers without users consulting the original information sources, such as the Helpdesk for Business website, have led to a significant reduction in the reported number of users. This negative trend is observed across all ILO web pages during the reporting period. In parallel, additional measures have been implemented to improve the detection and exclusion of both traffic from analytics, which has also contributed to a reduction in reported user numbers.

The website has been regularly updated with new content, including ILO publications, tools and training opportunities across the now 15 thematic areas covered by the Helpdesk. The Q&A section was redesigned to enhance navigation and overall user experience. The new section on **business and the labour dimension of human rights due diligence** has generated notable user interest and is now in the top five of the most visited web pages.

A. General data on website visitors

Table 7 provides a summary of activity for calendar year 2025 based on the new data available and cumulative data since the creation of the website in 2010.

The data is gathered through Google Analytics and include all web sites of the Helpdesk in English, French, Spanish and non-exhaustive information in relation the mirror sites in other languages.

► **Table 7: Helpdesk website activity – comparison for calendar year 2025, and cumulative total since 2010**

	Calendar year 2025	Cumulative total as of December 2025
Visits (sessions) and (average/month)	64,000 (5,333)	3,089,522
Users	50,000	2,751,618
% of new users	68%	-
Countries or territories visitors are located in	205	-
Pages viewed	115,000	4,419,454

B. Geographical distribution of users

The users were located in all five regions. Asia is now surpassing for the first time the Americas as the region where most users are coming from (37.8%) followed by the Americas (30,8%), Europe (25,8%), Africa (3,9%) and Oceania (1.7%).

► **Table 8: Geographical distribution of users**

Country	January-December 2025
Africa	1,842
Americas	14,575
Asia	17,900
Europe	12,227
Oceania	822

The top countries from which most of the users come remain similar with the previous years. It is however encouraging to note that new countries appear on the list of top website users such as the **United Arab Emirates** where the **2025 World Investment Conference** (organized by the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies, WAIPA) took place in October 2025 and where the ILO Helpdesk for Business was specifically promoted. Several countries benefiting from ILO development cooperation projects continue to figure in the top 25. This is the case for Mexico, Colombia, Peru and Argentina where the RBCLAC project co-funded by the European Union is being implemented by ILO-OECD and OHCHR as well as in India, Japan and Malaysia where the Building Responsible Value Chain in Asia through the Promotion of Decent Work in Business Operations Project (RBV-II) funded by Japan is also actively promoting the Helpdesk services.

► **The top 25 countries overall were:**

1. India	14. Japan
2. United States	15. United Arab Emirates
3. Mexico	16. Indonesia
4. Switzerland	17. Philippines
5. Colombia	18. Netherlands
6. United Kingdom	19. Argentina
7. France	20. Malaysia
8. China	21. Italy
9. Pakistan	22. Canada
10. Vietnam	23. South Africa
11. Peru	24. Australia
12. Germany	25. Saudi Arabia
13. Spain	

C. Most visited webpages

The 2025 numbers indicate shifts in the interest of the web users from freedom of association and collective bargaining, wages, occupational safety and health (most visited pages in previous years) to ILO Codes of practice, working time, non-discrimination and the labour dimension of human rights due diligence.

► **Table 9: The top 5 consulted Helpdesk Webpages were:**

Web page	Page views
1. ILO Codes of practice and guidance documents	10,600
2. Tiempo de trabajo	1,858
3. Business and working time	1,742
4. Business and non-discrimination and equality	1,494
5. Business and the labour dimension of human rights due diligence	1,377

D. Site traffic sources

Most users (55%) have accessed the Helpdesk web site through organic searches via search engines , 36% accessed it directly (typing the URL directly in their browser or clicking on a link from their bookmarks or PDF documents) and 7% were referred to the Helpdesk website from another web site. The remaining accessed it via social media or a reference in an email.

From the users that accessed the Helpdesk website from another web site, the following were the top referral web sites:

- International Training Center of the ILO (ITC-ILO): 311 users
- Inter-American Development Bank: 173 users
- Association of Professional Social Compliance Auditors: 94 users
- UN Global Compact: 89 users
- Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan: 50 users