



International
Labour
Organization

▶ Annual report of the Ethics Officer for 2025

Contents

	Page
Introduction	5
Ethics advice	6
Monitoring ethics	10
Awareness-raising, training and outreach	10
Ethical leadership	11
Policy development	11
Protection from retaliation for whistle-blowers	12
Relations with the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee (IOAC)	13
Key performance indicators	13
The Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations	14
General observations and conclusions	14

Introduction

1. The mission of the ILO Ethics Officer is to promote a culture of ethics, integrity and respect across the Office, in line with ILO values and principles. This annual report provides an overview of the activities carried out in 2025 in fulfilment of this mission, as well as related institutional developments.
2. At the heart of the Ethics Officer's work is the promotion of awareness and understanding of ILO values and the standards of ethical conduct that all ILO staff members – and the Office as a whole – are expected to uphold. These are set out in the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service,¹ the Principles of Conduct for Staff of the International Labour Office, the Staff Regulations and the relevant internal governance documents.² Furthermore, ILO values are based on the principles enshrined in the ILO Constitution and underlying relevant international labour standards. The Office's internal value framework thus includes the following five value clusters: (i) integrity, impartiality and accountability; (ii) social justice, sustainability and decent work; (iii) professionalism, collaboration and public service; (iv) respect, diversity and inclusion; and (v) resilience, innovation and impact.
3. The Director-General entrusted the ethics function (an integral part of the ILO's accountability framework) to the Ethics Officer. The Ethics Officer is independent of any other official, department or organizational entity of the ILO and reports directly to the Director-General. The responsibilities of the Ethics Officer are summarized below. In 2025, the Ethics Officer sought to discharge those responsibilities while paying particular attention to the challenges emerging from the changing multilateral environment currently under examination by the Governing Body.

► Responsibilities of the Ethics Officer

- *Provide ethics advice* to managers and staff members on questions of ethics, such as conflicts of interest, outside activities and occupations, gifts and so forth.
- *Monitor ethics at the ILO*, including through staff ethics surveys and meetings with stakeholders, and advise on ethics matters within his or her mandate.
- Contribute to the design, promotion and implementation of *awareness-raising and training* programmes to inform and educate staff with regard to ethical issues.
- Provide guidance on *policy development* to ensure that ILO internal policies and practices reinforce and promote the ILO's ethical standards.
- *Protect whistle-blowers against retaliation* by receiving and handling requests for protection from staff members who believe that action has been taken against them because they have reported misconduct or cooperated with an investigation.
- Receive information regarding allegations of inappropriate treatment of *domestic workers employed by ILO staff members*.
- Contribute to administering and reviewing the ILO *financial disclosure programme* in cooperation with the Office of the Treasurer and Financial Comptroller.
- *Research and promote ethical intelligence and ILO values* and facilitate initiatives to build and foster a workplace environment that upholds the ILO values and principles that underlie international labour standards.
- Discharge the ethics function for the *International Training Centre of the ILO (ITC-ILU)* in Turin, Italy.

¹ International Civil Service Commission, *Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service*.

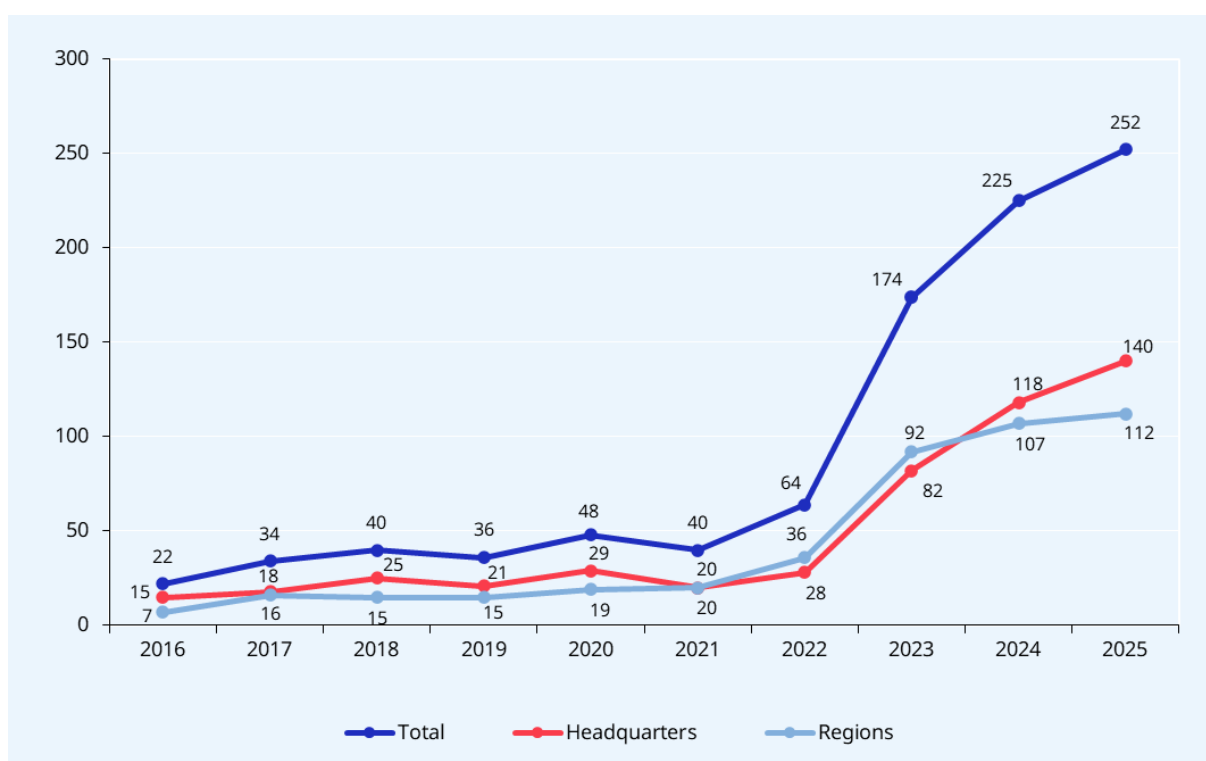
² The applicable internal governance documents are available on the webpage of the [ILO Ethics Office](#).

- Represent the ILO in international ethics forums, such as the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations.

Ethics advice

4. The Ethics Officer provides confidential ethics advice to staff members upon request. This is a 360-degree advisory function, since it embraces both the ILO Administration and individual staff members. Ethics advice is intended to support and guide staff in making decisions in accordance with the ILO's ethical standards of conduct. The number of staff members who sought and received ethics advice during 2025 was 252.³ The number of requests has continued to rise since the Ethics Officer became a full-time post (see figure 1 below).

► Figure 1. Number of requests for ethics advice, 2016–25



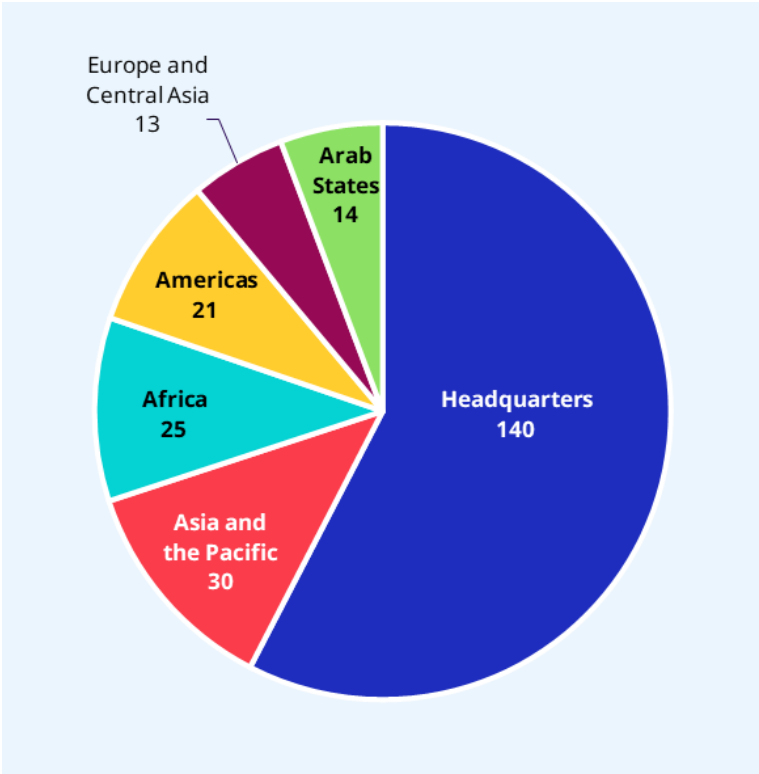
5. Of the 252 colleagues who consulted the Ethics Officer in 2025, 112 were based at field offices (where 66 per cent of ILO staff work) and 140 were based at headquarters (accounting for the remaining 34 per cent of ILO staff).⁴ While the increase in the proportion of advice requests coming from headquarters may be contextual and linked to the uncertainty accompanying the debates on the ILO in a changing multilateral environment, in 2026 the Ethics Officer intends to continue focusing his outreach on regional offices. Figure 2.1 provides a breakdown of advice requests by region, and figure 2.2 displays the data as compared to staff numbers by region. In

³ This number and the following data and charts do not include anonymous requests for advice, nor irreceivable queries such as requests from external parties on non-ILO related matters.

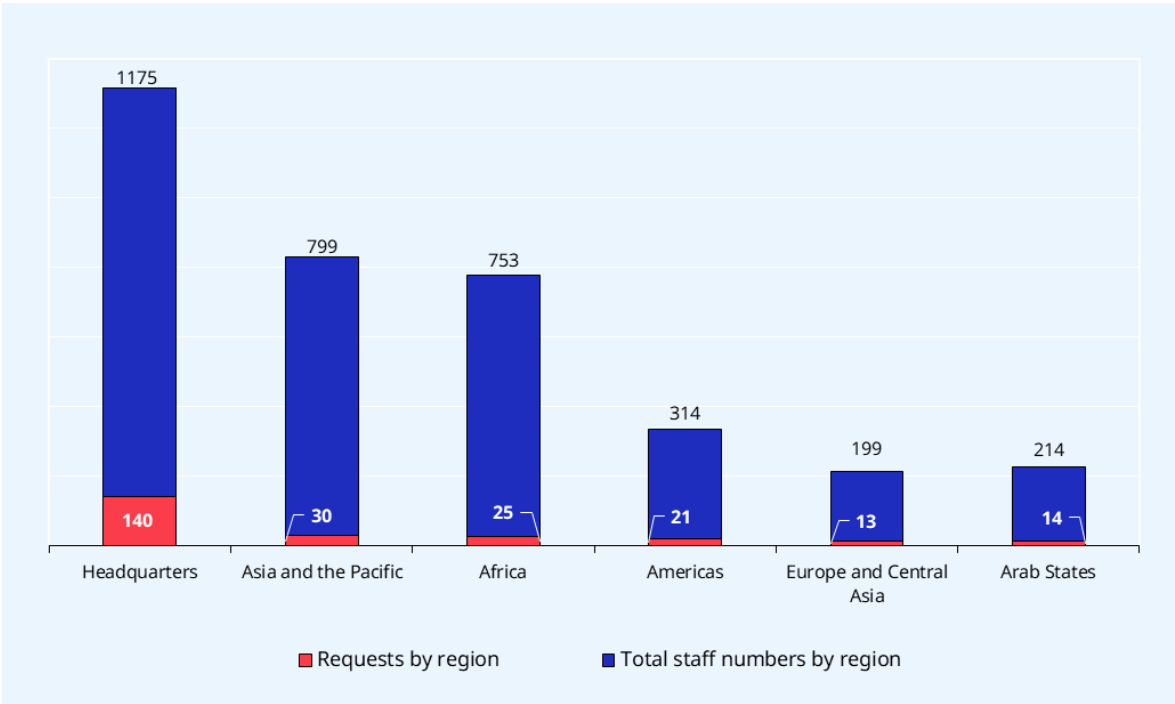
⁴ Figures as of 31 December 2025, when the ILO had 3,454 staff members, of whom 1,175 were based at headquarters and 2,279 in field offices.

addition to these Office request numbers, nine advice requests were received from staff at the ITCILO.

► **Figure 2.1. Number of ethics advice requests by region, 2025**

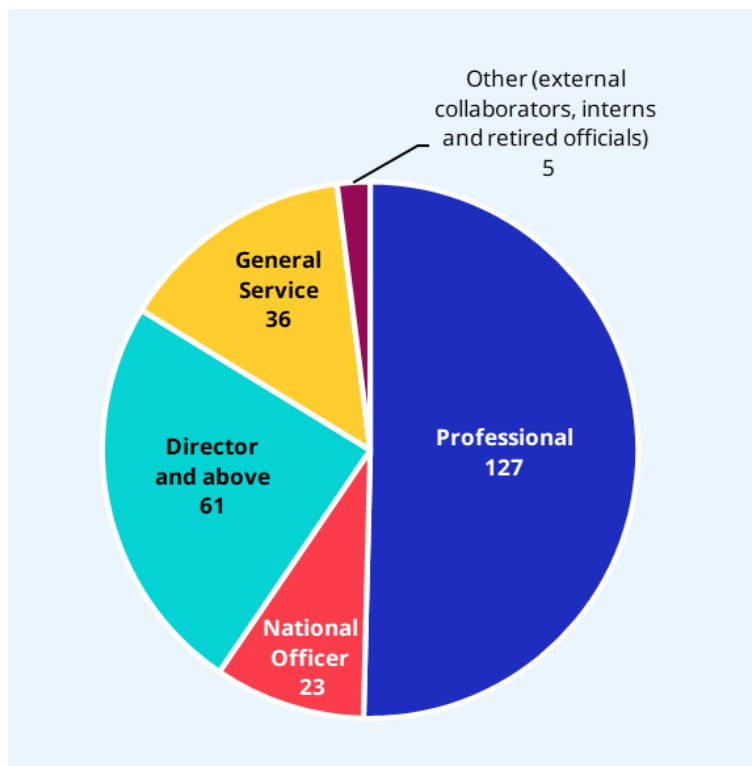


► **Figure 2.2. Number of advice requests compared to staff numbers by region, 2025**

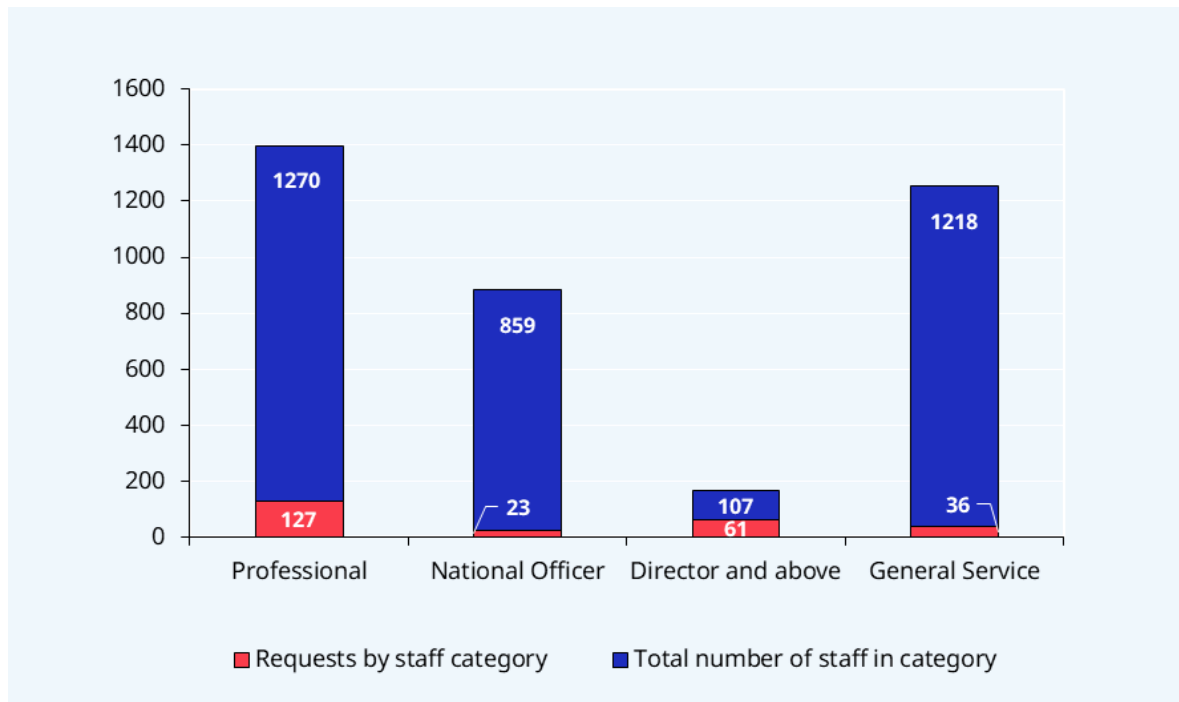


6. Overall, 141 requests were made by women and 111 by men (a more balanced ratio in comparison with 2024, when 153 requests were made by women and 72 by men). With regard to staff categories, of the 252 requests for ethics advice or support, 61 were made by officials in D posts or above, 127 by staff in the Professional category, 23 by National Officers, 36 by staff in the General Service category and 5 by others (including external collaborators, interns and retired officials); figure 3.1 shows the distribution. To add perspective, figure 3.2 situates the number of requests within the total number of staff members by category. This confirms the need to continue targeting ethics outreach at the General Service and National Officer staff categories, while also showing that the highest proportion of advice requests per staff member comes from the Director and above category, a positive finding given management's important role in leading by example.

► Figure 3.1. Number of ethics advice requests by staff category, 2025

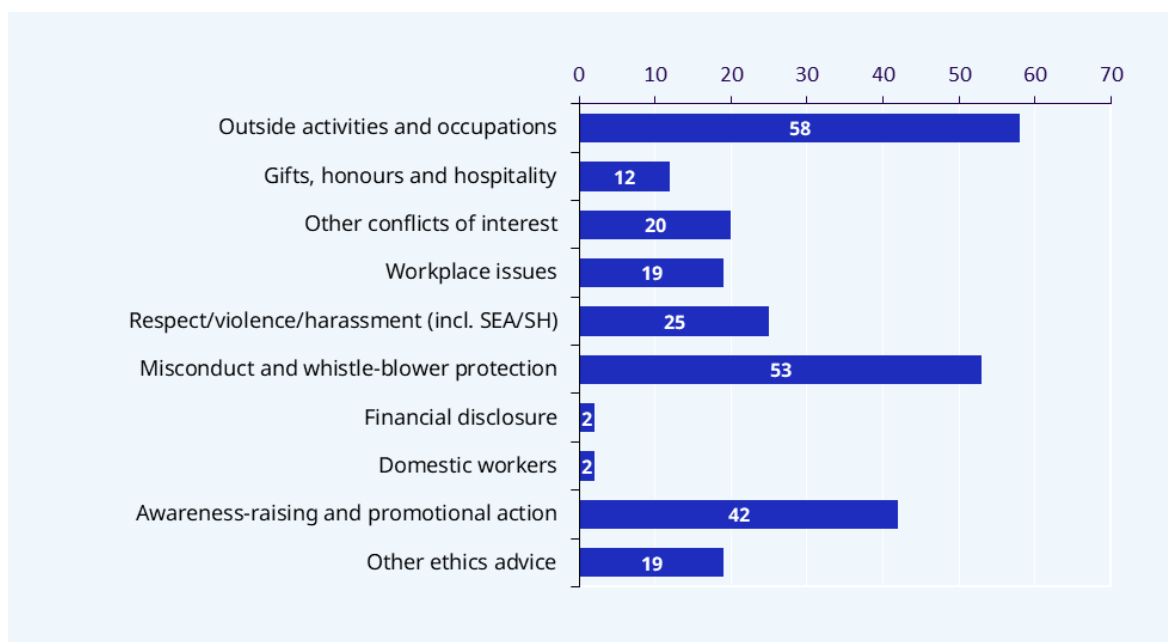


► Figure 3.2. Number of advice requests compared to staff numbers by category, 2025



7. With regard to the main subject areas of ethics advice requested, 53 of the requests made in 2025 related to reporting misconduct and whistle-blower protection (12 of which included the consideration of measures to prevent whistle-blower retaliation); 25 to promoting respect and preventing violence and harassment, including sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse; 58 to outside activities and occupations (a notable increase from 29 in 2024 which could relate to the current environment); 12 to gifts, honours and hospitality; 20 to other conflicts of interest; 19 to workplace issues; 2 to financial disclosure; 2 to the employment of domestic workers by ILO staff; 42 to awareness-raising and action to promote internal coherence with ILO values and 19 to other areas of ethics advice. Figure 4 below illustrates this breakdown.

► Figure 4. Number of ethics advice requests by subject area, 2025



8. A number of staff members sought information on channels for reporting various forms of misconduct or wished to report misconduct. As appropriate, those staff members were referred to the applicable processes for reporting misconduct, notably the Office of Internal Audit and Oversight (IAO), including through the new [ILO Integrity Hotline](#) set up by the IAO in 2025.

Monitoring ethics

9. The Ethics Officer meets regularly with Office stakeholders to monitor ethics in the workplace and make recommendations in the context of discharging his other responsibilities, such as training, awareness-raising and policy development. The last survey on ethics at the ILO was conducted in 2023.⁵ In 2025 the Ethics Officer continued to carry out briefing and training sessions with staff and management in all regions, encouraging action to address survey results that called for improvements in certain areas, as set out in the survey report and in the follow-up awareness-raising meetings and focus groups undertaken since. Furthermore, the Ethics Officer has been collaborating with the Human Resources Development Department (HRD) to address the results of the 2024 occupational health index staff survey. The Ethics Officer is contributing to the follow-up initiative to set and communicate clear standards for conduct and performance, including behavioural expectations for managers and staff, in particular through the updating of the ILO Principles of Conduct ethics guide.

Awareness-raising, training and outreach

10. The results of the ethics survey and the occupational health index staff survey also informed the preparation of a new mandatory online ethics training course, building on other organizations' best practices, as well as an ethics refresher course to be taken by staff every three years. The courses, which were launched at the end of 2025 with the support of the Talent Management Branch of HRD, give effect to a recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations

⁵ In depth Office-wide ethics surveys are carried out every five years. The ethics survey reports may be consulted on the [Ethics Office website](#).

system (JIU) and follow up on recent Governing Body discussions.⁶ By 23 January 2026, less than three months after its launch, 2,102 staff members had completed the mandatory training.

11. In addition to launching the online ethics training courses, the Ethics Officer continued to deliver bespoke ethics briefings and training sessions to promote understanding of the applicable ethical standards of conduct, their implications for managers and staff and the role and responsibilities of the Ethics Officer. A total of 410 staff members from the different regions participated in the tailored training sessions and workshops in 2025. The Ethics Officer was also invited to participate in the global meeting of Staff Union representatives, which provided an important outreach opportunity and for which the Ethics Officer thanks the Staff Union. Similarly, the Ethics Officer maintained the practice of providing briefings to new directors. Furthermore, the Ethics Office continued to issue internal broadcasts to raise awareness of specific ethics issues and undertook other outreach activities on ILO values with the support of the Internal Communications and Branding Unit, such as through articles and interviews in the Office's *Inside* magazine, including on ethical considerations relevant to the current changing multilateral environment.
12. Moreover, the Ethics Officer continued to collaborate on training and awareness-raising initiatives with HRD, the IAO and the Mediator to promote a culture of ethics, integrity and respect across the Office. In this vein, the Ethics Officer continued to support the "ILO Respect" campaign led by HRD and in 2025 contributed to intensive training for trainers involving officials from all regions and submitted a blueprint proposal to mainstream the campaign and methodology across the Office. The campaign adopts a participatory methodology that enables staff to raise issues and areas for improvement regarding respect at work, and it aims to enable the staff members concerned to draft and adopt charters on respectful workplaces that are responsive to the situation and needs of each particular office, department or unit.

Ethical leadership

13. In order to assist management in giving effect to ILO values through their daily work, in 2025 the Ethics Officer designed and launched a new programme entitled "Ethical Leadership: vision, action and reflection" (ELVAR). The programme, conceived to address perceptions of weaknesses in ethical leadership highlighted in the 2024 staff survey, was developed by building on insights drawn from neuroscience and management and behavioural sciences. Initially offered to incoming directors, it is currently open to all ILO officials with managerial responsibilities. In 2025 the ELVAR programme was piloted with a limited number of directors from all ILO regions. The programme offers a confidential space where managers can seek the support of the Ethics Office to reflect on the situation of their teams, including deliverables, needs, relational dynamics and ethical risks, and to formulate both an ethical leadership vision and concrete actions to implement it. In the longer term, the ELVAR programme offers a space for periodic reflection and discussion that allows managers to gain further ethical awareness and fine-tune their ethical leadership vision priorities and related activities.

Policy development

14. In 2025 the Ethics Officer updated the core governance document on ethics, the Office Directive on ethics in the Office (IGDS No. 76, version 3). This new version seeks to reflect the current set of responsibilities of the Ethics Officer as a full-time post, provide for the new mandatory online training and refresher courses for ILO officials and update some of the core elements of ethics in

⁶ GB.349/PFA/6.

the Office based on best practice developments and lessons learned (for example including a reference to the new ILO Integrity Hotline set up by the IAO, and requiring that actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest affecting staff members be disclosed in writing).

Protection from retaliation for whistle-blowers

15. Ensuring a culture of integrity demands the involvement of all staff members. This requires them not only to know and comply with the ILO's internal rules and regulations, but also to bring allegations of misconduct and wrongdoing to the attention of the competent internal authorities.
16. The ILO has in place a specific policy for the prevention of and protection from retaliation for any staff member who reports misconduct or cooperates with investigations or audits. The Office Directive on reporting misconduct and protection from retaliation,⁷ which applies to all staff, irrespective of service category or contract type, specifies the appropriate channels for reporting misconduct. It establishes arrangements for the prevention of and protection from retaliation to ensure that all staff members can report misconduct and cooperate with audits and investigations (the protected activities) without fear of retaliation.
17. The Directive entrusts the Ethics Officer with responsibility for receiving complaints from staff members concerning retaliation. In such cases, the Ethics Officer undertakes a preliminary review of a request for protection from retaliation. Where the Ethics Officer concludes that there is a prima facie case of retaliation, the case is referred to the IAO for investigation. If it is concluded on the basis of the investigation report that retaliation has occurred, the Office is required to adopt measures aimed at correcting the negative consequences suffered as a result. Cases may also be referred by the Director-General to HRD for consideration of appropriate disciplinary action against officials who engage in retaliation.
18. During 2025 two pending complaints alleging retaliation were investigated by the IAO. In both cases the investigation report concluded that the allegations of retaliation were unsubstantiated and that the Office would have taken the same action challenged by the complainants regardless of their protected activities (in one complaint, the non-renewal of a fixed term contract on a project for which the role concerned was no longer needed, and in the other a specific performance assessment and performance improvement plan). The Ethics Officer and the Director-General thus concluded that in these two cases, based on the evidence collected by the investigation, those measures were fully justified and retaliation could not be deemed to have taken place. Furthermore, an additional complaint was lodged during the reporting period which alleged a risk of retaliation in relation to a workplace grievance. That complaint was not receivable since it was filed prematurely, immediately after the protected activity (filing the grievance) and before any prejudicial action could have taken place. The complaint led instead to prevention measures (considering and assessing with the complainant measures to avert retaliation) and monitoring of the situation.
19. In 2025 the Ethics Officer also provided confidential advice on reporting misconduct and protecting whistle-blowers, with a total of 51 support requests received. Twelve of those requests entailed the consideration or establishment of preventive interventions to avoid retaliation. Pursuant to the aforementioned Directive, the Ethics Office, with the consent of the complainants concerned, engaged with relevant senior officials to ensure the monitoring of complainants' workplace situations with a view to preventing any retaliatory action against them as a consequence of their reporting of misconduct or cooperation with an audit or investigation.

⁷ IGDS No. 551 (version 2).

Relations with the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee (IOAC)

20. The Ethics Officer holds regular exchanges with the IOAC and expresses his appreciation for all the advice and support received. Unrestricted and confidential access to the IOAC by the Ethics Officer – and vice versa – is paramount to the independence of the ethics function, in line with the recommendations of the JIU.
21. At meetings with the IOAC in January and September 2025, the Ethics Officer sought its guidance on the implementation of the ethics work plan and updated it on various matters, including the follow-up given to its previous recommendations, the Ethics Office's activities, lessons learned, protection against retaliation, coordination with other oversight functions and the development of key performance indicators for the Ethics Officer (see next section).

Key performance indicators

22. In 2025 the Ethics Officer developed a set of key performance indicators, which draw on the best practices of other ethics offices in the multilateral system and were discussed with, and endorsed by, the IOAC. The indicators, designed to assess performance and foster the continuous improvement of the ILO Ethics Office, are as follows:

Objective	Target	Status	Comments
(1) Timely ethics advice and guidance	Requests for ethics advice or guidance receive an answer within an average of five working days.	Fully met	First substantive reply always within five days (in most cases on the same or following day).
(2) Timely processing of whistle-blower reports	Whistle-blower requests for protection are addressed by Ethics Officer (prima facie review) within half the time frame provided for in IGDS procedure (i.e. 15 days).	Not fully applicable	Complaint was irreceivable, thus did not entail a review (it was handled as a prevention request within one day, as were other whistle-blower queries).
(3) Clarity and usefulness of ethics support to staff	At least two thirds of staff who requested advice or support from the Ethics Office consider that the guidance or advice provided by the Ethics Officer was clear and adequately explained.	Fully met	Target measured through an anonymous end-of-year user feedback survey.
(4) Awareness-raising, training and outreach	At least 10 per cent of staff received in-person or live ethics training, participated in awareness-raising sessions or were given tailored ethics support in the preceding year.	Fully met	410 staff members covered.
(5) Engagement with the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations	The Ethics Officer participates in annual international meetings of the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations and actively contributes to its activities.	Fully met	See next section.

The Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations

23. The ILO Ethics Officer is a member of the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations (ENMO), which seeks to promote system-wide collaboration on ethics-related issues, with a specific focus on the consistent application of ethical standards and policies across the United Nations (UN) system. ENMO is an important forum in which international organizations' ethics officers share their first-hand experiences and learn from each other, a vital process for maintaining and fostering a culture of ethics within the UN family. In 2025 ENMO adopted Standards of Practice for Ethics Functions to which the ILO Ethics Office contributed, in particular by communicating the perspectives of small ethics offices.
24. The Ethics Officer also participated in the annual meeting of ENMO, hosted by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in October 2025. The discussions at the meeting focused on a variety of thematic areas, including the transformations and challenges arising from the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools, ethics and social media, organizational versus individual ethics, using data-driven approaches to strengthen ethics functions and handling ethical matters involving senior management. The ILO Ethics Officer also participated in the recurrent online ENMO forums, hosted a meeting of ethics officers based in Geneva and continues to promote the operation within ENMO of small ethics offices from multilateral organizations to provide an additional forum in which to discuss developments and share good practices.

General observations and conclusions

25. Ethics entails promoting and advising on actions, policies and an institutional culture that respect, embody and realize the values of the UN system and of the ILO. Last year the Ethics Officer continued to experience an increase in advisory and other requests, particularly in headquarters (see paragraphs 4 to 8), which may be related to the challenges faced by the Office in 2025, which are under examination by the Governing Body as part of its agenda item on the ILO in a changing multilateral environment. This context has resulted in a significant increase in uncertainty and a growing climate of concern among staff and may lead to heightened exposure to ethical risks, which calls for reinforced ethical vigilance. The new mandatory online ethics training (see paragraph 10) was designed to provide a useful resource in this regard.
26. Similarly, the Ethics Officer recalls the importance of ensuring that the Office and staff responses to this context are based on ILO values and discussed through social dialogue. The Ethics Office is at the disposal of all officials in this endeavour and highlights the importance of giving effect to the ILO decent work principles and other relevant organizational values, such as public service, impartiality, resilience and innovation; the latter has enabled the Organization to demonstrate its relevance during past crises, including by means of key milestones such as the adoption of the Declaration concerning the aims and purposes of the ILO (1944) (Declaration of Philadelphia). In addition to promoting this grounding in values through advisory, promotional and awareness-raising activities, in 2025 the Ethics Officer launched a programme on ethical leadership to assist managers in embodying ILO values (see paragraph 13). More broadly, the Ethics Officer remains available to support offices, departments and units wishing to carry out exercises to promote coherence with the ILO ethical framework within their areas of work, such as through the "ILO Respect" campaign (see paragraph 12).
27. Lastly, in 2025 the Ethics Officer witnessed a rise in queries and concerns regarding the emerging topic of the use of AI tools in the Office. Mirroring recent research on AI use, those queries tended to highlight that while AI tools can provide significant support to the work of the Office, they should also be used thoughtfully; they warned, for example, of source or reliability issues and raised concerns at the potential impact of AI tools on work ownership, human agency and users'

cognitive abilities. Noting that the Office's Information and Technology Management Department issued guidelines on generative AI in 2023 which it subsequently complemented with guidance on using the AI tools available to staff, and also acknowledging that this evolving subject, which goes beyond the purview of the Ethics Office, warrants interdisciplinary monitoring to continuously develop good practices, the Ethics Officer, in his advisory role, encourages the Office to continue paying close attention to such a transformational field. To this end the Ethics Officer, together with other stakeholders under their respective mandates, is promoting the creation of an Office-wide community of practice to foster a productive and appropriate use of AI tools in the Office in accordance with ILO values and prioritizing the continuous development of human intelligence at work.

Geneva, 23 January 2026

Jordi Agustí-Panareda
Ethics Officer