

SURVEY ON ETHICS IN THE ILO (2013)

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE OUTCOME

On 17 May 2013, the Ethics Officer invited ILO staff members working at headquarters and in the field to complete a survey on ethics in the ILO. The survey was sent via email to approximately 3000 ILO staff members. The methodology did not make it possible to identify which individuals participated and all information was treated confidentially. Since the establishment of the Ethics Office in 2006, this was the first time such a survey was conducted within the Organization. Of those who received the survey, 1206 opened the link to the questionnaire and 637 answered all the questions. While the questionnaire was mainly in multiple choice format, participants were also encouraged to voice their opinion through open ended questions, and many seized the opportunity to do so.

A series of questions required an affirmative or negative answer. The following figures should be highlighted: about 70% of the respondents were aware that there was an Ethics Office at the ILO, and among them 90% indicated that they were aware that they could confidentially discuss ethical enquiries and receive advice from the Ethics Officer. However, 60% of the respondents did not know that the Ethics Officer was in charge of whistleblower protection. Furthermore, a large majority of the respondents declared that they were aware of the ILO policies governing ethics-related matters and of the standards of conduct expected of ILO officials, but about half of them were not familiar with the relevant internal governance documents, such as documents on conflicts of interest, outside activities and occupation, or employment of close relatives of ILO officials. About 65% of the respondents were not familiar with the governance documents on Ethics in the Office and Whistleblower Protection.

The survey also included six open-ended questions, encouraging staff members to elaborate on certain issues and freely express their thoughts.

Question 16 asked if there were any factors which discouraged staff members to lodge a complaint or seek advice in relation to ethical issues: about 60% of the respondents replied “No”, and 40% replied “Yes”. The data suggests that staff members are often unwilling to report ethical issues because they fear retaliation, lack of confidentiality and lack of effective protection for whistleblowers. They also mentioned the difficulty of meeting the burden of proof and the lack of understanding of the procedure to be followed.

Questions 19 and 20 requested information on the needs and priorities of staff members in terms of training. It appears that about 70% of the respondents were interested in training. The most recurrent topics proposed for the training were related to the following: standards of conduct, conflicts of interest (case studies), use of funds and protection of whistleblowers.

Finally, 166 participants provided final remarks. Among the most recurring suggestions, staff members noted the need for compulsory ethical training for all staff, without exception. Participants were generally pleased with the initiative of the survey.

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