



## **Report of the Ethics Officer**

**2018**



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## Introduction

1. The Ethics Officer function provides support for and promotes compliance with ethical standards by staff of the International Labour Office. It also seeks to reinforce the possibility for all officials to report cases of disregard for these standards without fear of retaliation. The function includes the following responsibilities:<sup>1</sup>
  - (a) To provide guidance to the Human Resources Development Department (HRD) in ensuring 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 to ensure that ILO officials clearly understand the ethical standards that apply to them.
  - (b) On request, to counsel managers and all staff members on questions of ethics, including ethical standards that govern outside activities.
  - (c) To assist, in collaboration with HRD, in designing and promoting programmes to inform, educate and raise awareness of ethical issues for all ILO staff members.
  - (d) To receive complaints regarding retaliation or threats of retaliation from individual officials who believe that action has been taken against them because they have reported misconduct or cooperated with an audit or investigation. In this context, the Ethics Officer is required:
    - to keep a confidential record of all complaints received;
    - to conduct a preliminary review of the complaint to determine: (i) if the complainant engaged in a protected activity; and (ii) if there is a prima facie case that the protected activity was a contributing factor in causing the alleged retaliation or threat of retaliation;
    - to refer the matter to HRD, where appropriate, including for consideration of possible disciplinary action.
2. Since 1 February 2016, the function of the ILO Ethics Officer has been carried out by Martin Oelz, Senior Specialist on Equality and Non-discrimination in the Gender, Equality and Diversity and ILOAIDS Branch.
3. In line with the ethics function's terms of reference, the Ethics Officer reports directly to the Director-General, to whom he/she presents a periodic report. This is the 12th report submitted by the Ethics Officer, covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2018.
4. The report provides information with regard to the main aspects of the Ethics Officer's work, namely promotion, consultation and whistleblower protection.

<sup>1</sup> See Office Directive, *Ethics in the Office*, IGDS No. 76 (version 1), of 17 June 2009.

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## Summary of activities

### *Promotion*

5. Throughout 2018, the Ethics Officer delivered several briefings, induction and training sessions, both at headquarters and for external offices, to raise awareness and understanding of ethical standards of conduct, implications for managers and staff, and the role and responsibilities of the ethics function.
6. An ILO Ethics Survey was conducted in February 2018, which provided valuable insights into the organizational ethics environmental and associated risks. The survey reached a participation rate of 24 per cent. The survey results were shared with the Global Management Team and ILO staff. In a broadcast addressed to all staff members, the Director-General noted that the survey results confirm that staff is highly committed to ILO values and principles and recognize the seriousness of ethical risks both for individuals, staff and the institution. As stressed by the Director-General, areas requiring attention are the fostering of a culture where colleagues feel able to speak up; ensuring that misconduct can be reported without fear of retaliation; preventing, managing and resolving conflicts of interest; respect for confidentiality; and taking effective action in cases of violations of standards of conduct. While stressing the role played by the Ethics Officer, he recalled that promoting and displaying the highest standards of conduct was ultimately the responsibility of every member of staff and of all managers.
7. On 8 February 2018, the Ethics Officer facilitated a session on ethics in the context of the course “Managing employment disputes effectively in international organizations” organized by the International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin in collaboration with the ILO Office of the Legal Adviser.
8. On two occasions, the Ethics Office was in position to deliver ethics briefings face-to-face to staff of ILO field offices. On 7 April 2018, such a briefing was held for staff at the ILO Project Office in Bogota, Colombia. Staff at the ILO Country Office in Manila, the Philippines benefited from an ethics briefing delivered by the Ethics Officer on 26 July 2018.
9. On 11 September 2018, the Ethics Officer, jointly with an official of HRD delivered a session “Gender equality and diversity: Promoting a respectful working environment across the Office” during the training programme “Maximizing Field Office Performance: A capacity-building programme for ILO Office Directors” held at the ILO International Training Centre in Turin.
10. On 4 December 2018, the Ethics Officer held a briefing for staff of the ILO Country Office in Colombo, Sri Lanka, by videoconference.

### *Consultation*

11. Upon request, the Ethics Officer provides ethics advice to ILO managers and officials, including as regards outside activities and conflicts of interest. This is a 360-degree advisory function, since it embraces both the administration and officials whose interests are not necessarily the same.
12. In the course of 2018, the Ethics Officer was consulted by 40 officials, 20 women and 20 men.<sup>2</sup> The Ethics Officer provided personalized advice and, as appropriate, drew attention to the relevant rules and procedures. Among 40 colleagues having consulted the

<sup>2</sup> By comparison, the Ethics Officer was consulted by 22 staff members in 2016 and by 34 in 2017.

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Ethics Officer, 24 officials were from headquarters and 16 from external offices. The staff seeking ethics advice were predominately P staff, namely by 26 colleagues in that category. In five cases, advice was sought by D staff, in addition six national officers and two G staff.

13. The consultations related to questions regarding outside activities (12), workplace relations (six), gifts (five) and conflicts of interests (four). Another nine consultations dealt with other issues. In four other cases, staff contacted the Ethics Officer regarding potential misconduct on the part of other colleagues. In these cases, staff were reminded that the ethics function is not a channel for reporting misconduct, with the exception of complaints of retaliation, and were directed to the proper authorities.

### ***Whistleblower protection***

14. All staff members are required to report any case of fraud, presumption of fraud or attempted fraud to the Director-General through the Treasurer and Financial Comptroller and the Chief Internal Auditor.<sup>3</sup> The Chief Internal Auditor also receives reports concerning waste, abuse of authority and other misconduct contrary to ILO rules and regulations. Grievances regarding harassment can be lodged with HRD in accordance with the related provisions of the Staff Regulations.<sup>4</sup>
15. Staff members reporting cases through the appropriate channels in good faith are entitled to protection from retaliation. To this end, the Ethics Officer is responsible for administering the procedure for the protection of officials who believe that action has been taken against them because they have reported misconduct or cooperated with an audit or investigation.<sup>5</sup>
16. The role of the Ethics Officer consists in conducting, where there are reasonable grounds for doing so, a preliminary review of complaints of staff who allege retaliation. If appropriate, such a review can lead to a “qualified referral” of the matter to HRD for consideration of possible disciplinary action.
17. In 2018, the Ethics Officer addressed one complaint of retaliation. In this case a proposed action that was considered retaliation by the complainant had eventually not been taken and the complaint was closed.

### ***The Independent Oversight Advisory Committee (IOAC)***

18. Under its terms of reference, as revised most recently by the Governing Body at its 331st Session (October–November 2017),<sup>6</sup> the IOAC provides advice to the Governing Body and the Director-General on “the interaction and communication between the Governing Body, the External Auditor, the Chief Internal Auditor, the Ethics Officer, and ILO management” (paragraph 2(d)) and on “[c]ompliance and probity: the systems established by the ILO to maintain and promote compliance with laws, regulations, policies and high standards of integrity and ethical conduct to prevent conflicts of interest”

<sup>3</sup> Office Directive, *Anti-fraud and anti-corruption policy*, IGDS No. 69 (version 3), of 19 October 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Staff Regulations, chapter XIII.

<sup>5</sup> Office Procedure, *Ethics in the Office: Whistleblower protection*, IGDS No. 186 (version 1), of 8 September 2010.

<sup>6</sup> [Terms of reference for the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee of the International Labour Office.](#)

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(paragraph 3(g)). The terms of reference further provide that “The IOAC will have unrestricted and confidential access to the Chief Internal Auditor and the External Auditor, the Ethics Officer, and vice versa” (paragraph 5).

***The Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations (ENMO)***

- 19.** The ILO Ethics Officer is a member of ENMO which seeks to promote system-wide collaboration on ethics-related issues, with a specific focus on the coherent application of ethical standards and policies across the United Nations system. ENMO represents an important forum for ethics officers of international organizations to share their first hand experiences and learn from each other, which is vital for maintaining and fostering a culture of ethics within the UN family.

Geneva, 30 July 2019

Martin Oelz  
Ethics Officer