

**Reference document concerning  
“Update on Strategic Priorities 2010–11  
including on promotion of the Tripartite  
Declaration of Principles concerning  
Multinational Enterprises” (GB.312/POL/13)  
Updated on 6 October 2011**

**ILO programme to provide companies with expert  
advice on the realization of international labour  
standards and the MNE Declaration – “ILO Helpdesk for  
Business”**

The ILO Helpdesk for Business was set up on request of the Governing Body<sup>1</sup> and launched at the Governing Body in March 2009.

In order to ensure that replies are fully aligned with the jurisprudence and other guidance provided by the relevant instruments and ILO’s supervisory machinery and policy bodies, an Office-wide team of experts was established to provide technical inputs for the Helpdesk.<sup>2</sup> Replies are developed by consensus. The Helpdesk serves as a good example of the integrated approach specified in the 2008 Social Justice Declaration.

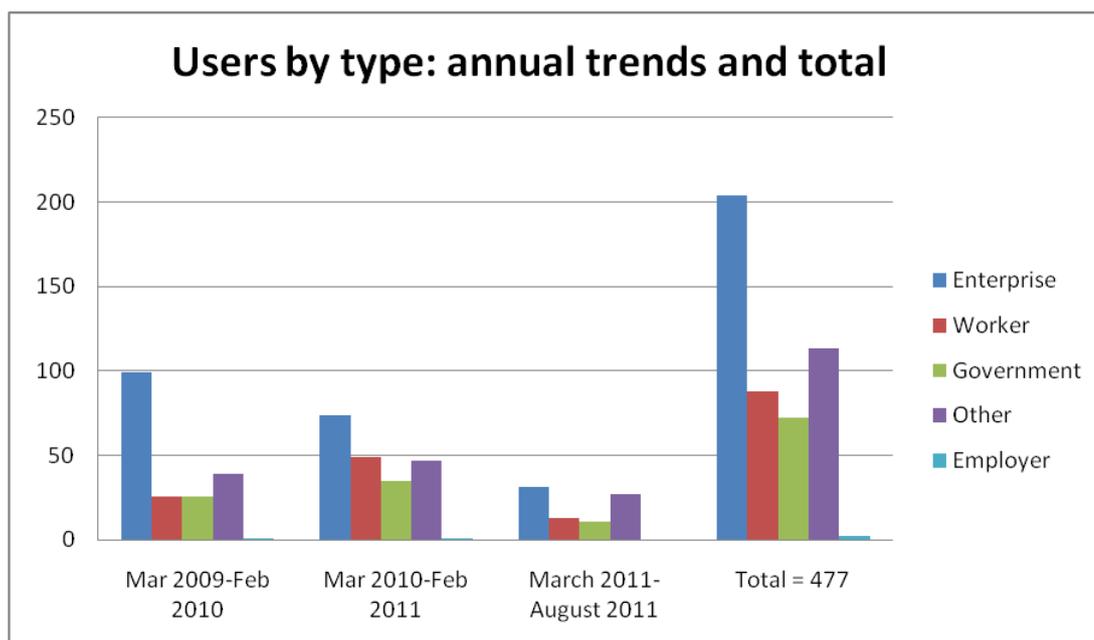
In order to make information developed by the experts team more broadly available, the ILO Helpdesk for Business web portal was subsequently developed and launched in English in November 2010 and in French and Spanish in April 2011.

From 15 March 2009 until 15 August 2011 the ILO Helpdesk for Business has received via email 477 receivable requests for information and expert advice. The largest portion of questions came from MNEs directly, with the rest almost evenly divided among government, workers, researchers and initiatives. Over time, there has been an increase in the proportion of workers’ organizations and government entities using the Helpdesk, as well as “others” which includes initiatives, journalists and lawyers. Two requests have been received by national employers’ organizations (see graph 1).

<sup>1</sup> See GB.301/MNE/2, para. 11.

<sup>2</sup> See GB.301/MNE/2 para. 19.

Graph 1: Frequency of questions by type of user



Concerning where the users of the expert advice service are located, the largest group remains companies with headquarters in Western Europe (see table 1). Approximately half of the questions received concerned issues in specific regions, while the remainder concerned global policies of companies (see table 2).

**Table 1: Users by region**

Africa	36
Caribbean	8
Central Asia	27
East Asia	29
Eastern Europe	13
Latin America	35
Middle East	20
North America	21
Pacific	4
Western Europe	206
International	72

**Table 2: Regional focus of queries**

Africa	37
Caribbean	7
Central Asia	29
East Asia	51
Eastern Europe	12
Latin America	29
Middle East	16
North America	8
Pacific	0
Western Europe	27
Global	194

The users come from a wide range of sectors, including: agriculture (20 queries); biofuels (five queries); chemicals (17 queries); construction (12 queries); electronics (15 queries); extractives (21 queries); finance (51 queries); food (20 queries); garments and textiles (47 queries); health services (three queries); heavy manufacturing (14 queries); ITC (ten queries); light manufacturing (18 queries); pharmaceuticals (eight queries); printing/publishing (four queries); public services (15 queries); retail (16 queries); services (19 queries); and shipping (17 queries). The sector was not specified for 142 queries.

Questions were fairly evenly spread across the range of topics covered by the MNE Declaration, with a higher concentration on termination of employment and conditions of work and life (see table 3).

Table 3: Breakdown of questions by area of MNE Declaration

MNE Declaration area	Category	Total
	Compliance with principles of ILS	39
	Definitions	8
	Forced labour	20
	Fundamental principles and rights at work	11
	ILO approach to CSR	16
	ILO approach to sustainable enterprises	2
	ILS and productivity	1
	Migrant workers	11
	Special categories of workers	15
<b>Employment</b>	Child labour	29
	Employment promotion	6
	Non-discrimination	27
	Termination of employment	16
	Other	3
<b>Skills and training</b>	Skills and training	2
<b>Conditions of work and life</b>	General	5
	HIV/AIDS	1
	Hours of work	16
	Housing/food	2
	OSH	23
	Paid leave	4
	Privacy	2
	Social security	2
	Wages	19
<b>Industrial relations</b>	Collective bargaining	10
	Freedom of association	14
	Social dialogue	6
<b>Other</b>	Helpdesk operations	13
	Interpretation procedure	1
	Requests for collaboration	8
	Statistical information	12
	Miscellaneous	7
<b>MNE Declaration as an instrument</b>	MNE Declaration as an instrument	12

In November 2010 the ILO Helpdesk for Business web portal was launched in English, consisting of 37 newly created web pages with information on the main topics of the MNE Declaration, ILO resources and tools for business and questions and answers. The web portal complements the individual assistance service. In April 2011 the French and Spanish language versions of the web portal were made available.

During the period 1 December 2010–31 July 2011,<sup>3</sup> the web portal has received 12,650 visits, averaging 60 visits per day; 55 per cent of these are new visits and 45 per cent are returning visits; indicating both expanding awareness of the Helpdesk web pages and sufficient value added to generate a high percentage of returning visits. Visitors come from:

Europe	4 665
Americas	2 897
Asia	2 073
Africa	779
Oceania	246
Unknown	180

Top 15 countries were: Switzerland, United States, United Kingdom, India, Germany, France, Canada, Spain, Mexico, Colombia, Australia, Malaysia, South Africa, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands, Argentina, Philippines and Indonesia.

The most consulted web pages during this period were:

1. ILO Helpdesk for Business English homepage
2. ILO Helpdesk for Business Spanish homepage
3. Child labour theme introductory page
4. Tools and resources introductory page
5. Q&As on business, discrimination and equality
6. ILO Helpdesk for Business French homepage
7. Q&As on business and OSH
8. Discrimination and equality theme introductory page
9. Q&As on business, wages and benefits
10. OSH theme introductory page
11. Collective bargaining theme introductory page
12. Q&As introductory page
13. Working time theme introductory page
14. Wages and benefits theme introductory page
15. Tools and resources on forced labour

<sup>3</sup> Please note that from 9 June to 8 July no data were available for the tracking process due to a major updating of all of the ILO Employment Sector web pages. The data for this period therefore are approximate.

These coincide with the topics which the Helpdesk Expert Service received most queries on.

Some 64 per cent of the visits came to the ILO Helpdesk web pages via search engines (e.g. Google), 19 per cent through direct traffic, and 17 per cent via referring sites (other websites and web pages that have created a link to the ILO Helpdesk for Business website). The top 10 referring sites include:

- Other ILO webpages
- UN Global Compact homepage ([www.unglobalcompact.org](http://www.unglobalcompact.org))
- Better Work homepage ([www.betterwork.org](http://www.betterwork.org))
- ITC-ILO CSR webpage of the Social dimension of trade and investment unit ([www.sdti.italo.org](http://www.sdti.italo.org))
- IOE ([www.ioe-emp.org](http://www.ioe-emp.org))
- Human Rights and Business Dilemmas Forum ([www.human-rights.unglobalcompact.org/](http://www.human-rights.unglobalcompact.org/))
- Capturing the gains ([www.capturingthegains.org](http://www.capturingthegains.org))
- CSR Germany – Deutsche Unternehmen tragen gesellschaftliche Verantwortung ([http://csrgermany.de/www/CSRcms.nsf/ID/home\\_de](http://csrgermany.de/www/CSRcms.nsf/ID/home_de))
- Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI) ([www.bsci-intl.org](http://www.bsci-intl.org))
- Business.un.org partnering for a better world (<http://business.un.org/en>)

The growth strategy for the ILO Helpdesk for Business is twofold:

(1) *Further outreach to internal and external target audiences:*

- promoting the ILO Helpdesk for Business to ILO staff at both headquarters and the field;
- working more closely with the social partners;
- encouraging governments to raise awareness of the ILO Helpdesk for Business in their government policies on CSR and CSR-related events;
- promoting the ILO Helpdesk for Business to other intergovernmental organizations; and
- more general promotion.

(2) *Further deepen the ILO Helpdesk for Business information and expert advice services:*

- regularly updating the web pages by adding:
  - new questions and answers developed by the experts team whenever available;
  - new resources and tools for business whenever available;

- links to training activities organized by the International Training Centre of the ILO, Turin targeting managers;
- information on ILO events and/or campaigns such as World Day for Safety and Health at Work, and World Day Against Child Labour where collaboration with the private sector might be sought;
- developing web pages on other topics, distilled from the MNE Declaration and based on queries submitted through the expert advice service; and
- expanding the resources offered on the web pages, to make it a resource often used by business;
- explore the possibility of developing e-learning modules or setting up webinars on specific topics of the MNE Declaration.