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FINANCE COMMITTEE

Hundred and Ninety-first Session

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2021 Annual Report of the Ethics Office

Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:

Ms Monde Magolo
Senior Ethics Officer, Ethics Office (ETH)
Tel: +3906 5705 3800 - Email: Ethics-Office@fao.org

Documents can be consulted at www.fao.org

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report presents the advisory and preventive work of the Ethics Office in 2021.
- To help foster ethical conduct and increase awareness across the Organization, the Ethics Office carried out a wide range of activities, ranging from individual contacts, providing input to standard setting and policy advocacy, to developing outreach material and offering dedicated training and education.
- Significant strides have been made in enhancing the visibility of the Ethics Office.
- The Financial disclosure programme was waived for the reporting year 2020 to pave the way for a review of the programme. The new Annual Disclosure programme will run in 2022 for the reporting year 2021.
- Significant work has gone into activities on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), specifically through increased technical support and outreach to strengthen FAO's PSEA global focal point network. Operational responsibility for PSEA will transition to the Office of Emergencies and Resilience in 2022 with Deputy Director-General Laurent Thomas, Chairperson of the Committee on Workplace Conduct and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), designated as PSEA Champion.
- The pandemic has provided opportunities to expand training and awareness raising activities across FAO, reaching more personnel than ever before. However, the lack of face-to-face interactions with the Ethics Office gives rise to other challenges for personnel who achieve less through virtual interactions. Resources continue to be limited for the global footprint of the Ethics Office but a P-3 position was created in 2021 for recruitment in 2022.
- Many international organizations including FAO are often faced with the emergence of external risks including integrity risks, such as organizational conflicts of interest. The Ethics Office is keen to contribute and remains committed to support the Organization in addressing these risks.

GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Finance Committee is invited to take note of the Ethics Office Annual Report for 2021.

Draft Advice

The Finance Committee:

- **appreciated the quality of the report and the analysis of issues presented, which covered the full range of responsibilities under the mandate of the Ethics Office, noting that the work carried out is of great importance to help ensure Ethical conduct across the Organization;**
- **welcomed the Director-General's and Senior Management's continued support to the Ethics Office mandate, noting that the tone from the top is instrumental in ensuring the Ethics Office will be successful in fostering an ethical workplace.**

Introduction

1. This report presents a summary of the activities carried out by the Ethics Office (ETH) from January to December 2021. The report of the activities is organized according to the main areas of work: Contacts; Standard setting and policy advocacy; Training, education and outreach; Financial disclosure programme; Protection against retaliation; Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA); and United Nations (UN) Coherence. It concludes with observations around challenges and opportunities.
2. In accordance with the Organization's oversight arrangements, this report was reviewed by the Oversight Advisory Committee and will be made publicly available on www.fao.org/ethics in a different format.

Mandate and mission

3. ETH was established in December 2009, pursuant to resolution 1/2008 of the 35th (Special) Session of the Conference, in November 2008. From 2012 to 2016, an Ethics Committee acted as an advisory panel on ethics matters. In 2014, the position of Ombudsman/Ethics Officer was created, located under the Legal Office (LEG) for administrative purposes.
4. In April 2019, the 161st session of Council endorsed the proposal in the Programme of Work and Budget 2020–21 to separate and enhance the Ombudsman and Ethics functions.
5. In March 2020, Ms Monde Magolo was recruited as Ethics Officer and the split of the two independent offices, that have direct reporting lines to the Director-General, became effective. As a P-3 Ethics Officer will be recruited in 2022, the title of the head of ETH was amended to Senior Ethics Officer for distinction.
6. ETH is mandated to foster a culture of integrity, transparency, and accountability to enable all personnel to perform their functions in accordance with the highest standards of conduct and to come forward without fear of retaliation when they witness misconduct.
7. The ETH terms of reference were approved by the Director-General in February and translated into all FAO languages.
8. Senior Management has been supportive of ETH's activities, with the Director-General setting the tone from the top that personnel's wellbeing and ethical conduct are priorities in FAO.

Statement of independence

9. ETH collaborated with LEG, the Human Resources Division (CSH) and the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to address certain cases. Nevertheless, the advice and opinions provided by ETH remained independent of Management and aspired to protect the interests and reputation of the Organization as well as those of the individuals concerned.

Contacts

10. In 2021, 427 contacts were handled by ETH, corresponding to an average of 35.6 per month. Some contacts or cases have required significant analysis and thus time, while others were handled swiftly. The trend demonstrates that there was a downward fall in the second half of the year (**Figure 1**).

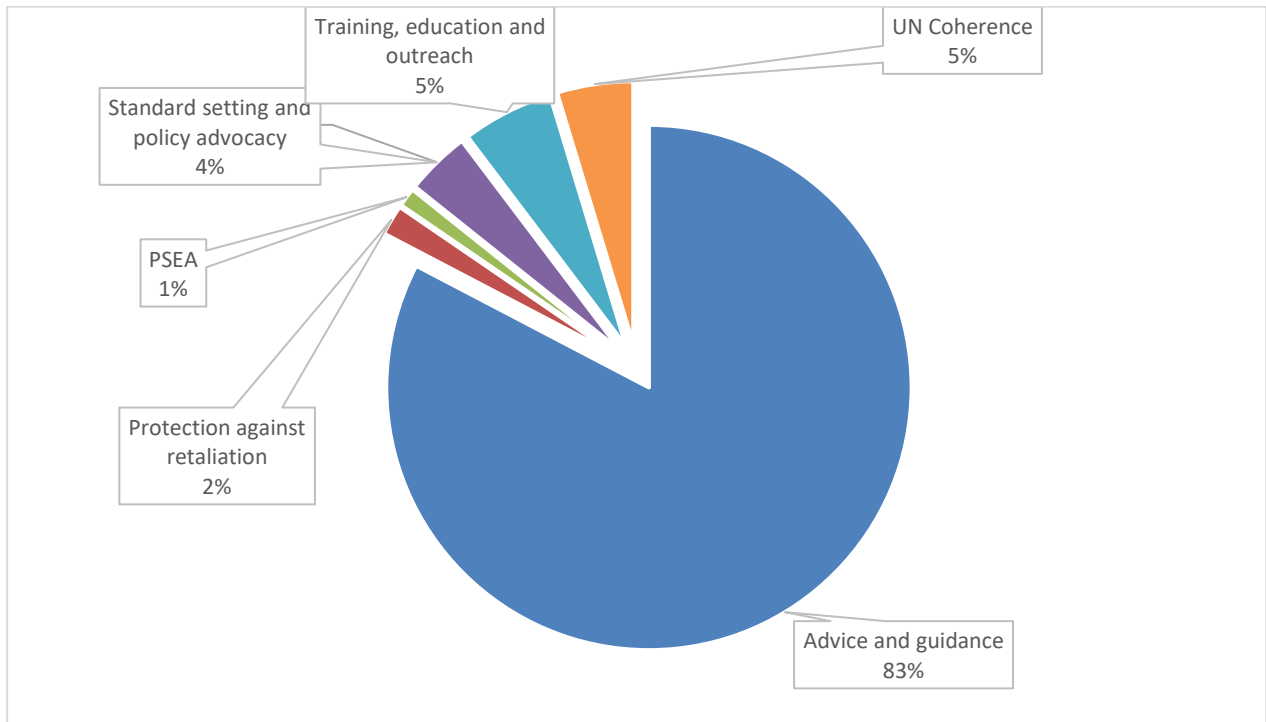
11. The contact categories reflect the nomenclature of sister agencies. More than 80 percent of ETH's contacts concern advice and guidance (**Figure 2**).

12. In 2021, contacts have been recorded with added details, aligned with Ombudsman Office (OMB) detailed categories, with an aim to provide a coherent basis of comparison.

Figure 1. Trend in number of contacts over 2021



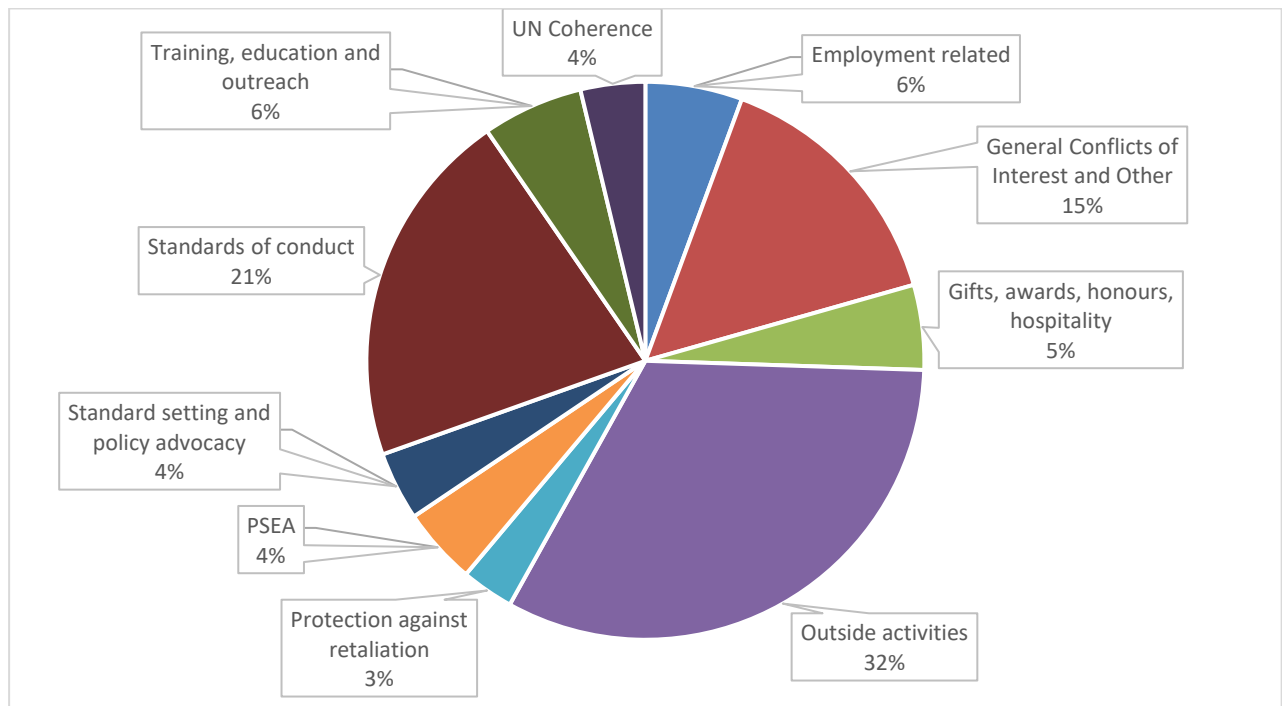
Figure 2. Percentage of contacts by category



13. Compared with 2020, where just below half of the contacts concerned standards of conduct including perceived harassment, abuse of power and sexual harassment, in 2021 a third of the contacts concerned assessments of outside activities and only just above 20 percent related to standards of conduct (**Figure 3**). It is considered that this is the positive effect of the efforts made to raise awareness about the ETH and OMB offices' distinct mandates.

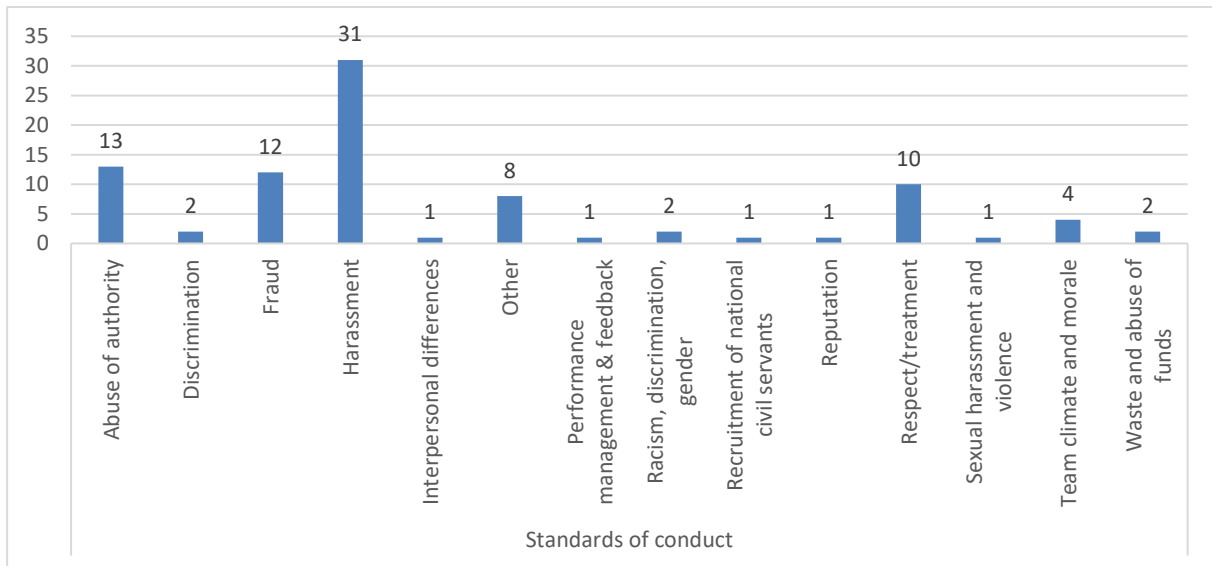
14. Conflicts of interest and Awards, gifts and honours corresponded to 20 percent of the contacts, which therefore remains fairly stable from 2020.

Figure 3. Percentage of contacts by subcategory



15. Thirteen contacts (3 percent of total contacts) were made regarding protection against retaliation, however, of these only eight were recorded as complaints and the rest under Advice and guidance. For details of the retaliation contacts, please see the Section on Protection against Retaliation.

16. Looking at **Figure 4**, it is clear that perceived “harassment”, “abuse of authority” and lack of “respect/treatment” are still the most prominent reasons why individuals contact ETH under “Standards of conduct”. In 35 out of 54 contacts, ETH referred the individual to either OIG for possible investigation as there was potentially misconduct, to OMB for informal resolution or to the relevant head of office.

Figure 4. Number of contacts by detail of the subcategory “Standards of conduct”

17. In **Figure 5** we can note that the majority of requests for outside activity assessments concern individuals who wish to undertake part-time engagements, frequently unpaid, including teaching. The activities that personnel wish to engage in vary greatly and are generally rooted either in a personal interest or a wish for personal or professional capacity development.

18. “Board” also includes technical or expert groups, editorial boards, advisory panels and similar, and permission is generally requested by individuals at the higher grades (50 percent were requested by staff members in the D and above categories).

19. Overall, there was a majority of women (60 percent) who requested outside activities assessments (**Figure 6**). For the other requests, there was more or less balance between the genders.

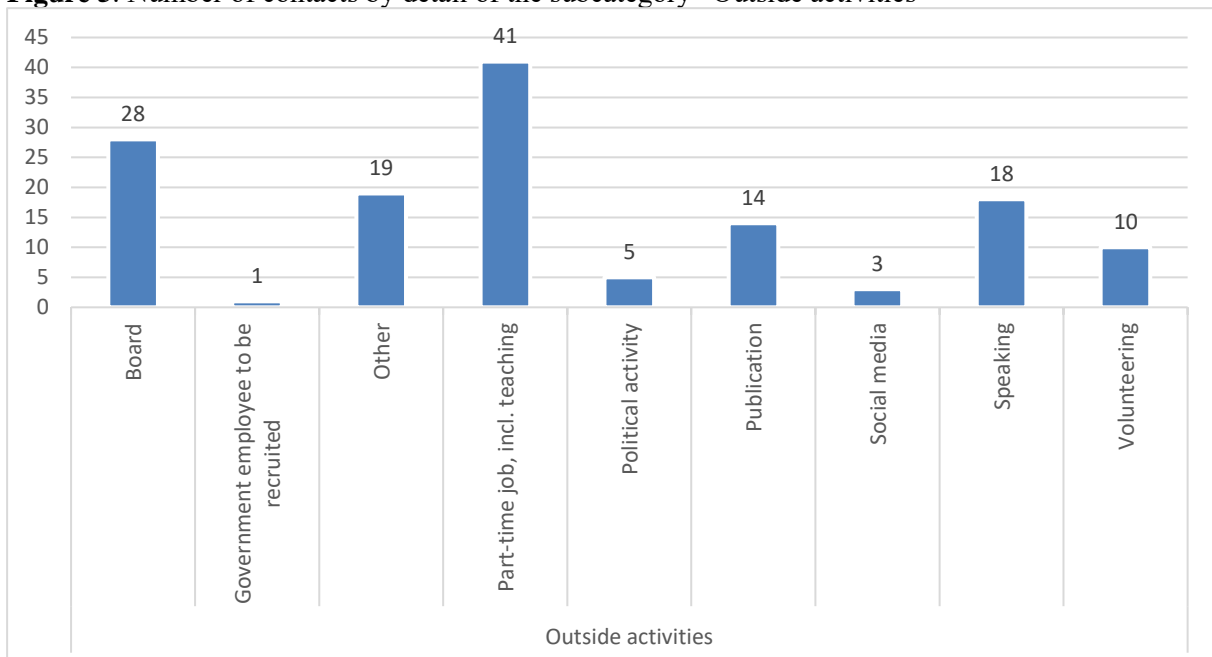
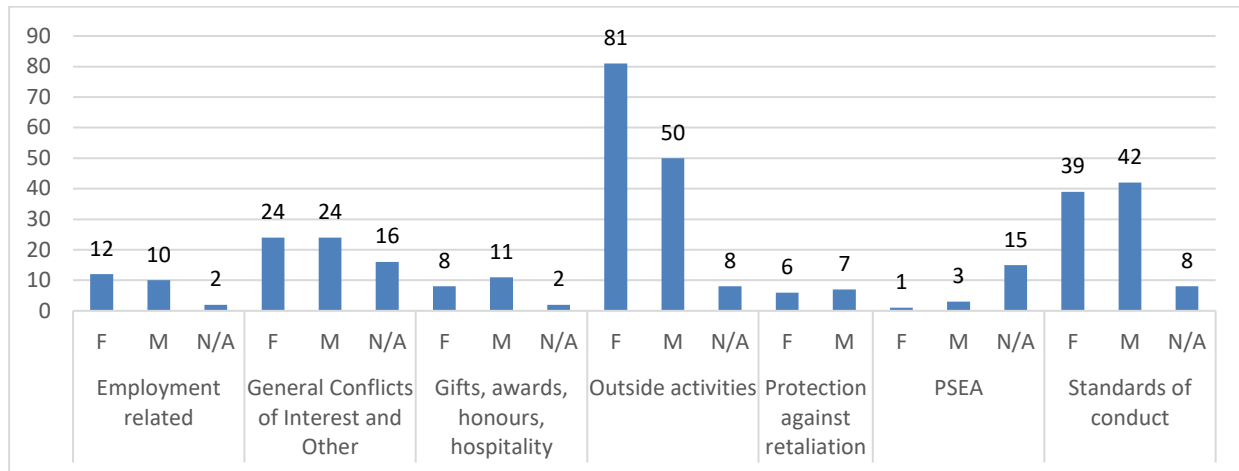
Figure 5. Number of contacts by detail of the subcategory “Outside activities”

Figure 6. Number of contacts by subcategory and gender (the subcategories Standard setting, Training and UN coherence are not included for lack of relevance)



20. Contacts regarding “PSEA” as shown above concern all types of contacts, including requests for information, for input to policies or UN coherence documents. In terms of allegations, ETH received three complaints, which were forwarded to OIG for investigation as appropriate.

21. The vast majority of contacts were made by headquarters-based personnel (**Figure 7**), which is a trend that might be explained by triangulating the data with that of the percentage of contacts made by the various categories of personnel (**Figure 8** and **Figure 9**). Management or externals (“N/A”) accounted for 28 percent of all requests, whereas P and D staff accounted for 34 percent. The number of staff in headquarters as of 31 December 2020¹ was 1 611, compared with 1537 for all the regions combined. Based on this, a correlation between the higher number of requests from headquarters and the number of P and D staff requesting advice may be natural and proportional.

22. Only 31 percent of the contacts were made by the affiliate workforce¹ despite the fact they account for 76 percent of the total workforce.² Further effort must be made to ensure the affiliate personnel feel empowered to contact ETH for any query or concern, and to raise awareness for instance about the need for them to also request assessment of outside activities or similar.

¹ “Affiliate workforce” refers to employees with contract modalities that are not covered by the FAO staff regulations and rules.

² [FC 185/10](#)

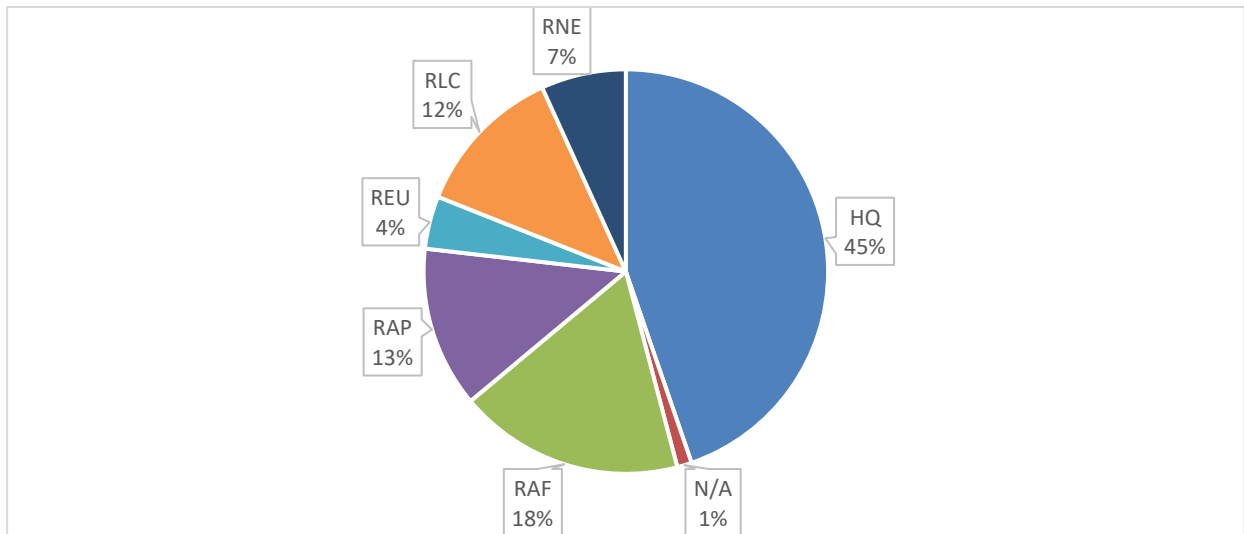
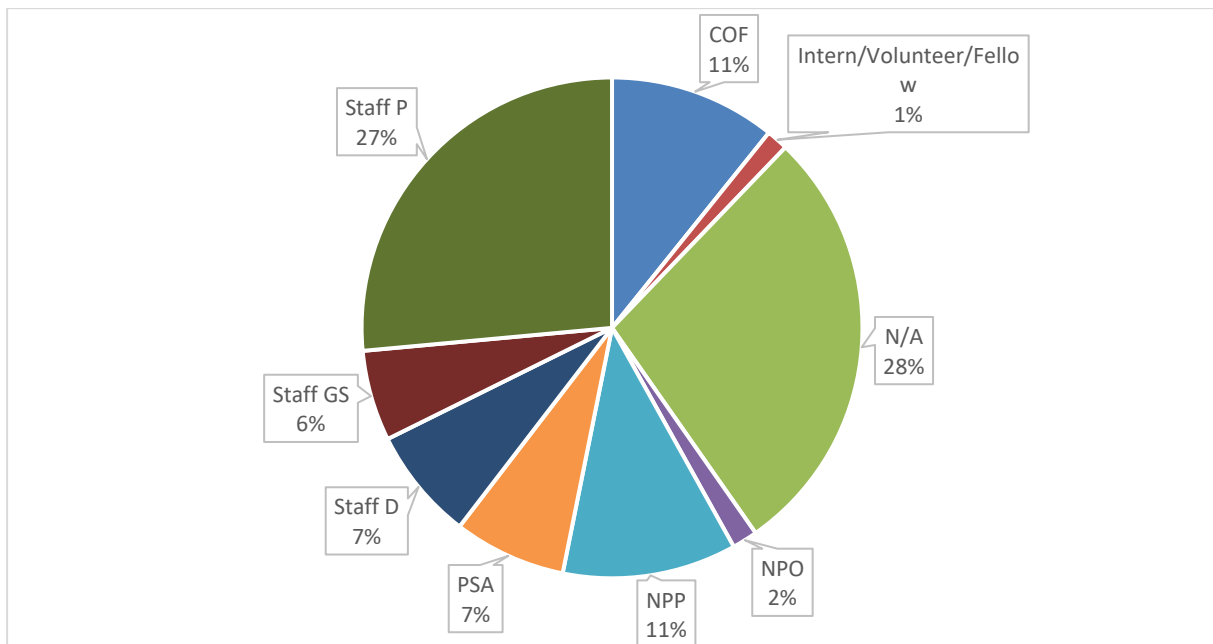
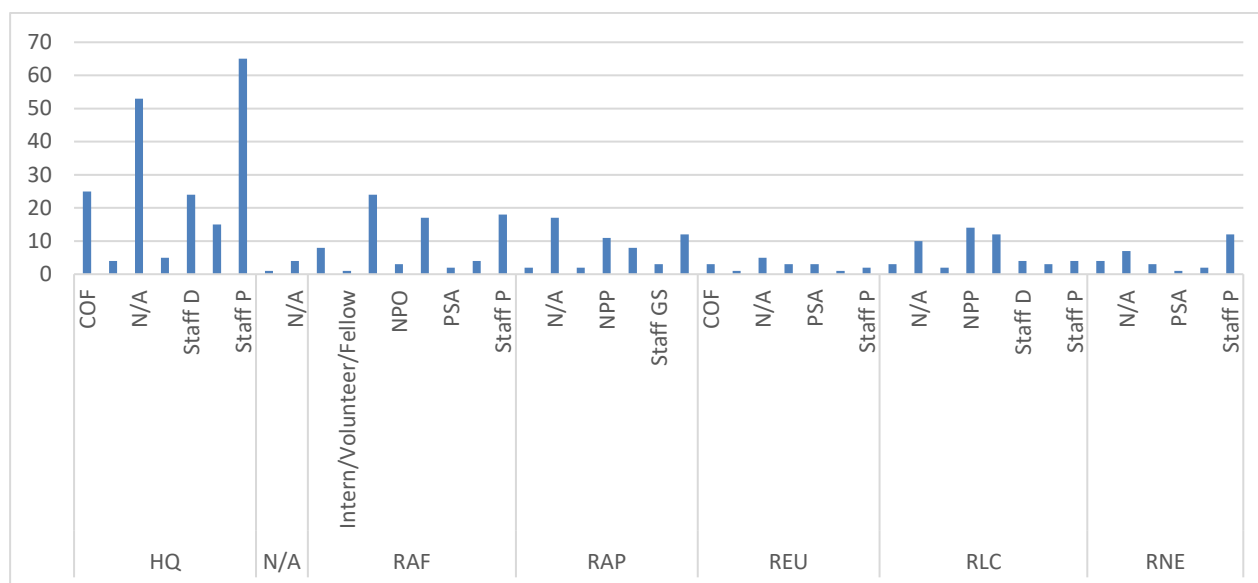
Figure 7. Percentage of contacts by FAO region**Figure 8.** Percentage of contacts by personnel category

Figure 9. Number of contacts by personnel category and region

23. In over 60 percent of the contacts, ETH responded within one working day from receiving all relevant documentation. This number does not include Protection from retaliation cases or responses within deadlines, as requested by Management. The quick turnaround time attests to the efforts ETH is making to give priority to personnel, cognizant of the challenges that late responses might produce.

Standard setting and policy advocacy

24. Fostering an organizational culture of ethics and accountability requires consistent, clear and solid policies that emphasize ethical conduct. To help this, ETH provided input to reflect ethical considerations in internal policies, practices and processes.

25. ETH is part of the **Workplace Integrity Network**, a working group under the umbrella of the Committee for Workplace Conduct and PSEA which is an Organizational group collaborating across different offices to mainstream and enhance ethical conduct in various areas of work and relations.

26. ETH is also an observer in the FAO Engagement and Partnerships Committee, established under Administrative Circular (AC) 2021/07.

27. ETH developed a **Roadmap** on where to go or whom to contact for workplace concerns (published in February) and the first FAO **Code of Ethical Conduct** (published in May). The documents, which were reviewed by a wide range of internal stakeholders, are important tools for FAO personnel to navigate policies, regulations and rules, as well as understand where to receive guidance on how to address their issues. They also help personnel understand the different mandates of offices. The publications are available in all FAO languages and are posted on both the Intra- and the Internet.³

28. A revised **Whistleblower Protection Policy** was published in June 2021, and a proposal for Alternative review mechanism as envisaged by paragraph 40 of the Whistleblower Protection Policy, was shared with the Director-General for decision. A **standardized retaliation report form** will be published in 2022.

³ They are all available publicly here: <https://www.fao.org/ethics/en/>

29. In addition, ETH provided input to various requests for new and revised policies from across the Organization and ETH has been proactive in making recommendations for establishing new and/or revised policies, guidelines and standards, including:

- Annual Affirmation to the Code of Ethical Conduct (substantial input to the content of the form);
- Conflict of interest disclosure form, which is an enhancement of the existing form used during the recruitment process for all personnel (substantial input to the content of the form);
- Declaration of loyalty and Conflict of interest disclosure form specifically for national civil servants who seek employment with FAO (substantial input to the content of the form);
- Content Management Framework for the Administrative Manual, Administrative Circulars (AC) and the Handbook (review and comments);
- Revision of Manual Section 331 on Appeals (review and comments);
- FAO Racism and discrimination survey (review and comments);
- Input to United States Note Verbale on the 7048a Questionnaire regarding ethics and whistleblowing (substantial input);
- Policy on recruitment of national civil servants (initiated discussions with CSH);
- FAO's data protection framework with regard to data classification and data mapping exercise (review and comments);
- Inclusion of PSEA wording in vacancy announcements (substantial input).

30. The ETH has undertaken a substantial **review of the following internal policies**, which are still in progress:

- Outside activities policy;
- Gifts policy.

31. A **conflict of interest (COI) mapping exercise** was initiated in 2021 that is aimed at providing a clearer understanding of the various COI risks (personal and institutional) of the Organization, including their paths and drivers, and sectoral or regional fragilities, if any. Further work on this will be done in 2022.

32. ETH has had the opportunity to share recommendations with CSH on suggested improvements to areas within recruitment and performance management, in particular, and upward feedback directly with the Director-General and other representatives of Management on systemic issues.

Training, education and outreach

33. A strong ethical framework is particularly critical in a multicultural environment such as FAO that has an extensive decentralized structure. Guidance must be ample but also concise and clear, so that personnel understand the Organization's expectations towards them and they are able to abide by the rules and make sound ethical decisions. Outreach and awareness raising are critical to enhancing knowledge and, thus, compliance.

Training and education

34. ETH has worked with the Learning and Performance Branch (CSHL) to include the Code of Ethical Conduct in the onboarding training material for new hires and in the curriculum of specific training courses.
35. ETH initiated discussions with CSHL to explore the feasibility of having employees take refresher training every two or three years for the ethics-related mandatory courses. Discussions with CSHL will continue in 2022.
36. FAO personnel **completion rates for ethics-related training** (all mandatory) for an average of 14 420 employees are as follows (as at 31 December 2021):
- Whistleblower Protection Policy: 74.8 percent
 - Ethics and Integrity: 61.4 percent
 - Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse: 78.2 percent
 - Prevention of sexual harassment (video): 80.3 percent
 - Working together harmoniously: 75.8 percent.
37. ETH rolled out *Leading ethically* training from October 2020 and *Working ethically* training from January 2021. The trainings were offered virtually to all personnel across the Organization and facilitated by [QED Consulting](#). Two cohorts were developed; one for managers at P-5 level and above and one for all other personnel over two rounds for a total of 56 sessions (incl. a pilot session).
38. The individual training sessions were three hours long and consisted of presentation of the subject matter by facilitators, ethical dilemmas discussed in breakout groups, followed by debriefing in plenary. Three sessions were delivered in French and three in Spanish, developed based on specific requests from RAF and RLC.
39. All trainings were facilitated by two trainers and supported by two members of ETH personnel.
40. Training design and development as well as the initial 33 sessions were funded by ETH and 23 sessions were funded by CSH.
41. In total **1 738 members of personnel completed the trainings**⁴ while 3 196 persons registered (2 649 for *Working ethically* and 547 for *Leading ethically*), meaning that 1 458 persons registered (46 percent) but did not attend.
42. In total, **327 persons completed the *Leading ethically*** training out of which 249 persons were at the P-5 or above level⁵ (76 percent), and of these 79 at D level or above (32 percent of 249). For the ***Working ethically*, a total of 1 411 persons completed the training**. On average, 31 people attended each session that had the maximum capacity of 60 persons.
43. In *Leading ethically*, 62 percent of the participants were male, whereas 62 percent of the participants in *Working ethically* were female. For context, as of 31 December 2020, 26 percent of D and above were female and 44 percent of P staff were female⁶ (data for P-5 only not available). With these numbers, we may assume that the female participation was slightly proportionally higher in the

⁴ Some people attended the same session (i.e. *Leading* or *Working*) twice. For accuracy in the number of people trained, we deleted double entries and recorded one session per person.

⁵ In the first round of *Leading ethically* sessions, the training was limited to P-5 and above but this limitation was removed in the second round.

⁶ Human Resources Annual Report, 2020: <http://www.fao.org/3/nc679en/nc679en.pdf>

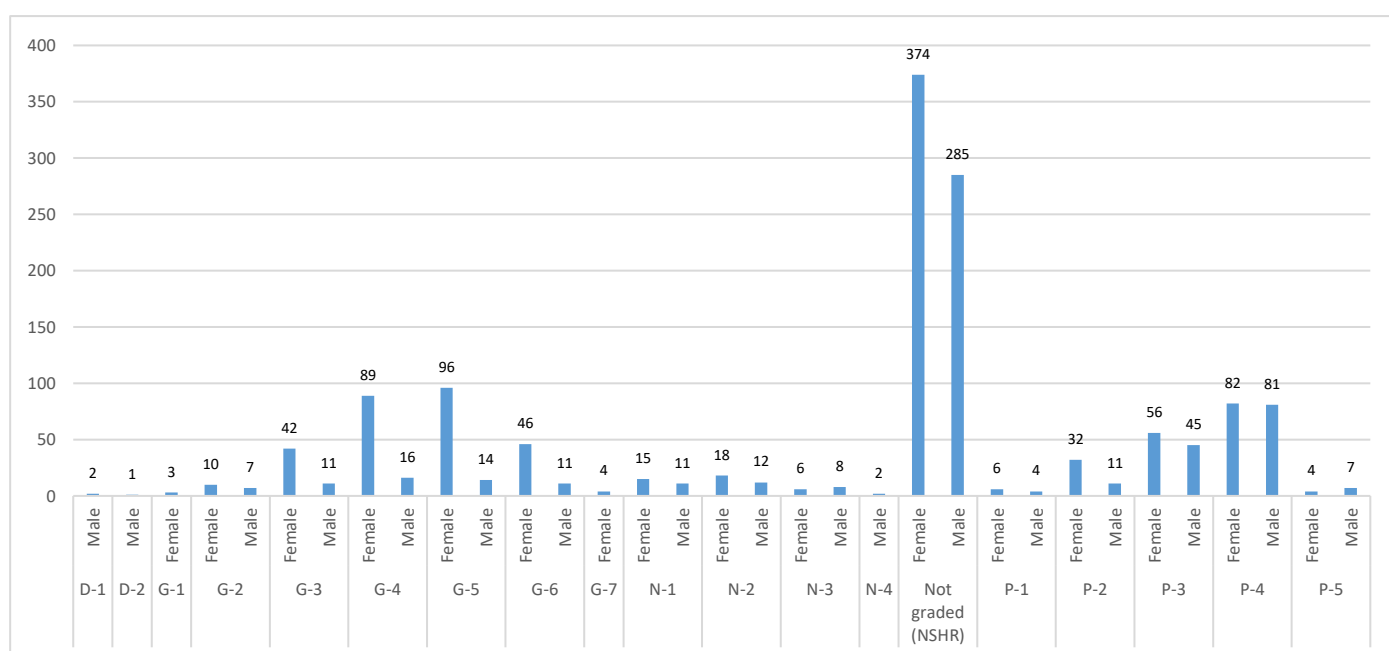
leader sessions than that of their male colleagues. In the general service (GS) category, 67 percent are female, whereas this was the case for 37 percent of the affiliated workforce.³

44. In the *Working ethically* sessions, 646 participants were from the GS staff category (24 percent), 117 were national professional officers (NPOs) and 1 401 from the affiliated workforce (51 percent); 550 persons from the P category (incl. 19 at P5 level) and seven were D or above. Although around half of the participants were affiliated personnel, these participants only represent about 13 percent of the total affiliate workforce in FAO which, as of 31 December 2020, was 10 165 (76 percent of the total workforce). This means that only a fraction of the affiliate workforce attended the training. In comparison, 52 percent of the GS workforce of 1 250 across FAO participated in the training. The correlation between participation and the proportion of staff/affiliated personnel could indicate that staff members were more interested in participation, or perhaps felt it more useful or obliged to do so.

45. The P, D and above categories represent 1 686 persons of the total workforce. Between *Leading* and *Working* sessions, 806 participated in the training corresponding to 48 percent of that part of the workforce.

46. **Figure 10** shows the partition of participants by contract type/level and gender, and it is noticeable that overall there was a significant proportional larger overall interest from women, and particularly in the affiliated category, than men in attending. In comparison, as of 31 December 2020, the overall representation in the training of female staff across all levels in the Organization was 52 percent, with women in the affiliate workforce at 37 percent, and all female employees in the Organization at 40.7 percent (all levels, all contract modalities, any funds) in 2020.⁷

Figure 10. Number of participants in *Working ethically* by gender and contract



47. In terms of geographical representation of the participants to *Working ethically* there was a high proportion from headquarters (41 percent) compared with the five decentralized regions (59 percent) compared with the fact that 81 percent of the workforce are located in the Decentralized

⁷ Human Resources Annual Report, 2020, para. 46: <http://www.fao.org/3/ne679en/ne679en.pdf>

Offices.⁸ The percentages for *Leading ethically* are fairly similar, although here more than half of the participants were located in headquarters. **Table 1** shows the percentage of personnel in a given duty station that participated in the training.

Table 1. Percentage of workforce that attended *Working or Leading ethically* by region

FAO region	# of personnel	Percentage of personnel from regions attending training
RNE	1 075	10 percent
REU	1 525	12 percent
RLC	2 216	9 percent
RAP	2 259	11 percent
RAF	3 732	6.5 percent
HQ	2 536	29 percent

Outreach

48. In alignment with the ETH communications plan, the ETH conducted various outreach activities for personnel in headquarters and Decentralized Offices to raise awareness on ethical matters and conduct. In 2021, ETH participated in **24 individual briefings** across the globe and organized **four webinars** with **total participation of 3 887 members of personnel**.⁹

49. ETH published eight **articles** on the Intranet to increase awareness amongst personnel globally.

50. Annex 1 presents details of the outreach activities.

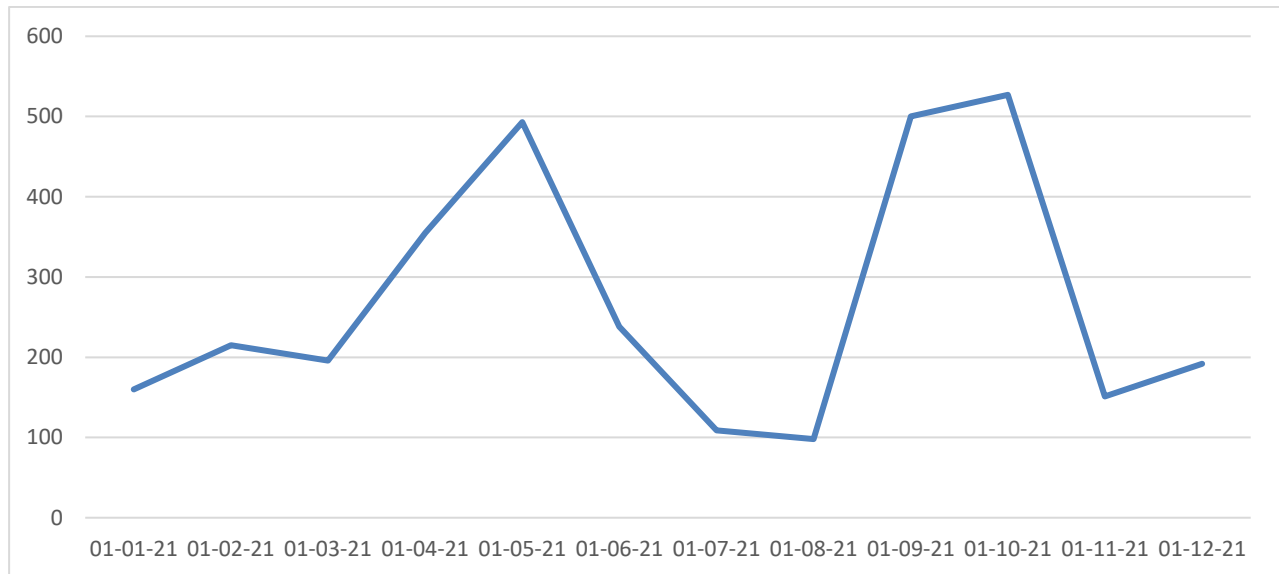
51. ETH is indirectly supported by a **network of Ethics Focal Points**, who act as “Ethics Ambassadors” and help raise awareness in the Decentralized Offices on the mandate of ETH and expected conduct. They do not receive complaints or provide support on any issues of concern, but make sure that colleagues are referred to the correct office, or consult the appropriate rules.

52. ETH developed a welcome package to focal points, which included detailed information about their role, as well as information about the ETH mandate. Focal points provide quarterly reporting to ETH on their activities.

53. In most briefings and webinars, ETH would refer to its Intranet pages to encourage personnel to familiarize themselves with the guidance available there. To assess whether this encouragement had an impact, ETH obtained data of Intranet usage and triangulated this with the dates of any major outreach activities. **Figure 11** shows the number of ETH page views per day over the year 2021. In total there were 5 697 unique page views, made by 3 234 users. There were steep increases in page views in April, May, September and October, which overlap with when webinars were held. There was little activity over the headquarters summer period. The activity level was similar to that of the contacts (see **Figure 1**), except for the third quarter where contacts remained stable but there was an increase in Intranet usage.

⁸ Human Resources Annual Report, 2020, para. 24: <http://www.fao.org/3/ne679en/ne679en.pdf>

⁹ This is not the number of unique participants as the same persons might have attended several sessions.

Figure 11. ETH Intranet page views, 2021

Annual disclosure programme

54. The Organization’s Declaration of Interest and Financial Disclosure Programme (FDP) was established when the 132nd Session of the Council in June 2007 approved an amendment to Article I of the Staff Regulations (Staff Regulation 301.1.10 and 301.1.11). Between 2007 and 2011 work was undertaken to set up workflow, questionnaire, risk criteria, and review approach of the FDP. In August 2011, AC 2011/20 was issued on the “Implementation of Financial disclosure programme Pilot phase”.

55. AC 2012/15 and then 2015/18 defined the implementation of the programme at a corporate level and clarified that the “Declaration of Interest and Financial Disclosure” was a tool to assist FAO in identifying and addressing personal conflicts of interest (COI) for the purpose of mitigating or eliminating any such COI, to the benefit of FAO. It was not conceived and is not administered as a tool to uncover fraud or unjust personal enrichment. This is consistent with other disclosure programmes in the UN system.

56. Following the request to the ETH by the Oversight Advisory Committee in their February 2019 meeting “to review the FDP and conduct a cost benefit analysis” with the purpose of understanding if the current programme is fit for purpose, such analysis was carried out and a revised programme presented to Senior Management for consideration in November 2021.

57. The analysis concluded that most of the financial data requested was not found to be effective in detecting conflict of interest, uncover fraud or personal enrichment. Instead, the new programme focuses on identifying conflicts of interest, and therefore the revised questionnaire now has a larger section dedicated to COI disclosures. While some of the financial-related information has been maintained, this has been left only where it would be deemed relevant in helping to identify potential COI. The questionnaire has been enhanced to cover family relationships, outside activities, leadership roles, vendors and monetary obligations and remunerations.

58. Due to the review, the programme was waived in 2021 (reporting year 2020).

59. It was also decided that for 2022 (reporting year 2021), the review would be undertaken internally by an ETH-recruited consultant.

60. FAO uses a secure Sharepoint platform for filing the disclosure statements that ensures the appropriate level of data protection. In 2022, ETH will work with CSI on developing an improved information technology filing system, which will allow for enhanced efficiency for the participants, as well as for the reviewers.

Protection against retaliation

61. The primary objective of the Whistleblower Protection Policy (WPP) is to ensure that personnel can report misconduct and cooperate with audits, investigations, security services and, in practice, proactive integrity reviews without being retaliated against.

62. Under the WPP, the ETH is responsible for conducting reviews of complaints for determining whether there has been a *prima facie* case of retaliation and, if so determined, the matter is referred to the OIG for investigation.

63. Thirteen contacts concerning protection against retaliation were received in 2021. Of these, five requests in reality concerned “advice and guidance” with a different underlying issue (such as alleged harassment) and were recorded as such; three requests did not meet one or more criteria under the WPP and a *prima facie* review was not carried out. For the remaining five cases, *prima facie* reviews were undertaken. In one case *prima facie* retaliation was found, and the case was forwarded to OIG for investigation. Four cases resulted in no *prima facie* determination of retaliation and the complainants were informed consequently.

64. ETH observes that in a number of the requests for protection against retaliation, which primarily concern employment-related issues such as non-renewal of contracts or termination of contracts, root causes can be attributed to poor performance management and a lack of transparent communication around the reasons for the management decisions. Whilst the non-renewal or termination of employment may be based on legitimate reasons, managers need to ensure that due process is followed in managing performance and that personnel are given a fair chance and opportunity to improve.

65. ETH provided its independent review of two OIG investigations sent to the Director-General (one case from 2020, the other the one referred to in paragraph 64 above). In both cases, ETH agreed with OIG’s finding and found no retaliation.

66. In 2021, one complainant (a 2020 case) appealed ETH’s *prima facie* determination, in line with provisions of paragraph 40 of the FAO WPP.

67. The establishment of no *prima facie* retaliation does not prevent a complainant from submitting a complaint regarding other alleged misconduct.

Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse

68. The Senior Ethics Officer served as FAO’s organizational focal point for PSEA.

69. Based on a whole-of-Organization proposal developed in January 2021 by ETH in close consultation with affected offices, the focal point responsibility will transition in early 2022 to the Office of Emergencies and Resilience (OER), under the oversight of Deputy Director-General Laurent Thomas, designated as Champion for the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). Operational responsibility for PSEA will transition to the Office of Emergencies and Resilience (OER). The shift will help ensure adequate organizational oversight and accountability.

70. In Decentralized Offices there is a PSEA focal point network consisting of FAO staff members who serve in this role in addition to their normal tasks.

71. The Task Force on Workplace Conduct and PSEA set up in 2020 was elevated to a formal Committee (DGB 2021/35). ETH has observer status on this Committee. The Committee has two working groups: one on workplace conduct led by the Director, CSH and another on PSEA led by the Director, OER.

72. The FAO PSEA Policy framework is in place (AC 2013/27) and has been strengthened by the updated WPP (AC 2019/06), mandatory training, and establishment of the aforementioned Committee. A review of the PSEA policy was initiated in 2021.

73. Increased technical support and outreach was provided to strengthen FAO's PSEA global focal point network and a digital platform managed by ETH was used to promote exchange of good practices.

75. Substantial technical support was provided to about 50 Decentralized Offices over the year, specifically on:

- PSEA standard operating procedures and information sharing protocols;
- victim-centred grievance mechanisms, incl. community engagement and design of complaint mechanisms;
- PSEA materials, community messaging, mainstreaming of PSEA;
- safe recruitment, human resource vetting and screening;
- PSEA risks and implementing partners;
- regional specific questionnaire for focal points, results analysis and priority action plan and milestones;
- ramifications of and guidance regarding the UN Implementing Partners Protocol 2018 and UN Victim Assistance Protocol 2019;
- expectations and deliverables related to donor funding;
- provision of access to multilingual visual materials on PSEA;
- guidance regarding additional new questions on SEA in the Decentralized Offices Country Annual Report and new PSEA Scorecards.

76. In addition, ETH:

- provided support to various PSEA due diligence requirements in donor agreements;
- provided input to the Framework for Environmental and Social Management (FESM) Public Consultation;
- developed a PSEA Risk Assessment Tool and Guidance in collaboration with OSP;
- developed or contributed to Guidance material on humanitarian principles, SEA complaint intake and recording, and SEA inclusive grievance mechanisms.

77. ETH has provided input to management reporting on PSEA. The UN Secretary-General requests all leaders at every level to certify annually to their governing bodies through a management letter, that they have: (a) fully and accurately reported all allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse related to its staff and affiliated personnel; and (b) made available to its staff and affiliated personnel the mandatory training on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as information on: (i) how FAO ensures that its implementing partners have minimum standards in place to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse; and (ii) the mechanisms established to ensure a victim-centred approach. The letter has been made available on the Members Gateway.

78. FAO employee participation in the yearly 2021 UN Survey on *Perceptions on the standards of conduct in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse* has doubled since 2020 and increased ten-fold in four years. In the 2021 results, there were signs of significant positive progress including attitudinal change amongst FAO respondents. This includes a 45 percent reduction in acceptability of (legal) transactional sex since 2020. The number of respondents who do not think it is their responsibility to report colleagues from FAO or other UN agencies has halved since 2019, whilst just 1.07 percent now

agree that sex with under 18 year olds is acceptable. Such shifts highlight the value of organizational investment in training and awareness particularly in high risk contexts of emergency and of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst these are positive markers, there is no doubt that FAO like other sister agencies has a responsibility to continue enhancing its PSEA response mechanisms to ensure that they are victim centric, noting that nearly 40 percent of the respondents disagreed or did not know if their duty station provided adequate assistance and support to SEA victims, trust and confidence of respondents that FAO took appropriate action to reports of SEA increased from just 45 percent in 2020 to 78.33 percent in 2021.

United Nations coherence

79. The Senior Ethics Officer was nominated FAO Focal Point for the [UN Culture Change Innovation Challenge](#), a UN system-wide initiative to search for innovative ideas to foster a safe and inclusive work environment. The Challenge is spearheaded by the CEB Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment within UN System Organizations. Applications for innovative ideas to address sexual harassment from teams in UN organizations and agencies have been solicited with a deadline of February 2022.

80. The Ethics Office participated in the 2021 Annual Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations (ENMO) Conference, organized and hosted by the 2021 ENMO Co-Chair, the European Central Bank.

81. As part of continued efforts to build and advance engagements outside FAO, in 2021 ETH met with ethics counterparts from the Rome-based Agencies, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to exchange best practice and explore new opportunities for collaboration.

82. Furthermore, the Director of the UNDP Ethics Office and the Ethics and Compliance Advisor of UNOPS participated in the ETH-organized global webinar on Conflicts of Interest (485 participants) and shared their experiences about assessing, handling and mitigating risks connected to personnel's conflicts of interest.

83. ETH participated in an IAEA-organized webinar on workplace conduct and harassment for personnel of the joint FAO/IAEA Centre (Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture).

84. ETH contributed to the A455 - JIU Review of the ethics function in the United Nations system and provided input to the draft report in September 2021.

Observations

85. Due to travel restrictions in the last two years caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, ETH efforts in training and awareness raising have primarily been delivered remotely. While these modalities allow for wider coverage, there are missed opportunities to have meaningful conversations through face-to-face interactions with colleagues on matters of ethics and personal conduct.

86. It is observed that a great number of personnel particularly in the field offices still prefer to raise concerns in person or attend face-to-face training sessions. This could explain why training participation rates are proportionately higher in headquarters relative to global personnel numbers (see Section Training, Education and Outreach).

87. Despite the impending recruitment of a P-3 staff member from mid-2022, the current capacity of ETH does impact the office's ability to effectively meet the demands of FAO's global footprint, as field visits demand time and resources. This essentially means that in any given year, a very small

proportion of personnel would benefit from face-to-face engagement and it would easily take several years for a reasonable amount of personnel to have benefitted from such interactions.

88. The significant efforts to deliver ETH services through virtual modalities have translated into an upswing in requests for services. This suggests that there are nonetheless advantages to be derived from the remote and virtual ways of working.

89. In 2021, the demands on ETH as regards PSEA were considerably high. ETH found it difficult to effectively act as Senior Focal Point under the Policy. As an independent office that is not part of Management, ETH is not positioned to exercise authority over resources and to direct Organization-wide PSEA activities. It goes without saying that SEA can carry significant risks for organizations in the humanitarian and development sector. ETH takes note of FAO Management's commitment to enhance the Organization's PSEA framework. ETH remains committed to support FAO's PSEA work as an advisor in line with its mandate.

90. ETH welcomes its inclusion as observer on FAO's Engagements and Partnerships Committee. ETH considers that the establishment of this committee will contribute to the proactive identification and management of organizational integrity risks, including but not limited to organizational conflicts of interest (OCIs) that may arise in FAO's private sector partnerships. It is recognized that OCIs is an uncharted area for most international organizations. In this regard, ETH remains available to support enhancement of existing due diligence procedures to ensure FAO can timely identify potential organizational integrity risks not just at the on-boarding stage, but also throughout the lifecycle of any partnership.

91. ETH appreciates the opportunities it has had in 2021 to make recommendations to Management and looks forward to continuing the collaboration into 2022.

ANNEX 1

The following webinars were held:

1. On 14 April, **Webinar on Protection from Retaliation** with speakers from ETH, OIG and CSH (372 participants).
2. On 12 May, **Webinar on Conflicts of interest** with speakers from ETH, United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) (485 participants).
3. On 15 September, **Webinar on PSEA is everybody's business** with speakers from ETH, OSP and RLC (528 participants).
4. On 6 October, **Webinar on Code of Ethical Conduct** with speakers from ETH, OIG and RLC, and opening by the Director-General (825 participants).

The following briefings were held:

1. On 1 February, FAO Rwanda briefing on OMB and ETH mandates by Senior Ethics Officer and Ombudsman (21 participants).
2. On 25 March, FAO Colombia on PSEA by FAOR, Regional PSEA Focal Point and PSEA Advisor (200 participants).
3. On 29 March, EST briefing on ethics by Senior Ethics Officer (11 participants).
4. On 08 April, RLC Townhall on ETH mandate, standards of conduct, COI by Senior Ethics Officer (518 participants).
5. On 15 April, briefing of new ADG-RNE on ethics by Senior Ethics Officer (1 participant).
6. On 04 May, RNE Focal points briefing on role and mandate of focal points by Senior Ethics Officer (21 participants).
7. On 11 May, RAP Focal points briefing on role and mandate of focal points by Senior Ethics Officer (31 participants).
8. On 11 May, SFS briefing on ethics by Senior Ethics Officer (51 participants).
9. On 20 May, RAF Focal points briefing (two sessions in English and French respectively) on role and mandate of focal points by Senior Ethics Officer (70 participants).
10. On 27 May, participation in RNE HR Awareness week, briefing on COIs by Senior Ethics Officer (126 participants).
11. On 04 June, RLC Focal points briefing on role and mandate of focal points by Senior Ethics Officer (42 participants).
12. On 10 June, REU Focal points briefing on role and mandate of focal points by Senior Ethics Officer (18 participants).
13. On 02 September, RAF briefing on COI, Whistleblower protection policy by Senior Ethics Officer (58 participants).
14. On 14 September, SFS briefing on WPP by Senior Ethics Officer (111 participants).
15. On 21 September, participation in the monthly RAP meeting to brief on the outcomes of the UN PSEA survey (70 participants).

16. On 13 October, FAO Uganda briefing on COIs by Senior Ethics Officer (39 participants).
17. On 20 October, FAO Bangladesh briefing on COIs by Senior Ethics Officer (84 participants).
18. On 05 November, FAO Sierra Leone briefing on COI, gifts, outside activities by Senior Ethics Officer (47 participants).
19. On 02 December, FAO Uganda briefing on reporting lines, confidentiality, standards of conduct by Senior Ethics Officer (70 participants).
20. On 06 December, RAP PSEA focal point briefing by PSEA Advisor and Senior Ethics Officer (77 participants).
21. On 09 December, briefing of new FAOR Philippines.
22. On 13 December, briefing of new FAOR Sri Lanka.
23. On 17 December , briefing of new FAOR Myanmar
24. On 21 December, briefing of new FAOR Nepal and Bhutan.

The following Intranet articles were published:

1. [Another step forward for the Ethics Office](#) (published 11 February).
2. [Preventing sexual exploitation and abuse is everybody's business](#) (published 19 March).
3. [Happy Labour Day!](#) (published 30 April).
4. [Another first!](#) (published 28 May).
5. [Honing in on conflicts of interest](#) (published 13 July).
6. [Focusing on whistleblower protection](#) (published 30 August).
7. [PSEA is everybody's business](#) (published 21 September).
8. [Creating an ethical environment together](#) (published 21 October).