

Office of Ethics and Conduct (ECO)

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

INTRODUCTION

The present report provides an overview of the activities of the Office of Ethics and Conduct (ECO) during 2021. This is in line with the Charter of the Office of Ethics and Conduct, IN/283 (attached), which states that ECO will prepare an annual report and make it available to all staff of the Organization.

Some highlights of the Annual Report 2021 are the implementation of the Yearly Declaration of Interests process for the first time in IOM, involving 382 staff members, and the finalization of the Policy against Retaliation. In addition, the mandatory online training “Ethics and Conduct at IOM: *The Values We Share*” has been translated into Arabic to make it more accessible to a large number of IOM personnel.

MANDATE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE OFFICE

ECO’s mandate is to promote ethical awareness and compliance, and ensure that IOM’s rules, policies and procedures follow the standards of integrity called for in the IOM Standards of Conduct (IN/15, Rev. 1), including protection of staff against retaliation for reporting misconduct.

ECO carries out its functions under the principles of objectivity, impartiality, independence, confidentiality, and fairness. It conducts its activities with the highest levels of competence and integrity.

ECO’s activities include:

- Assessing all allegations of retaliation and ensuring protection against retaliation, in accordance with the applicable procedures (IN/275);
- Providing recommendations on submissions from senior managers and other relevant staff on the obligation to disclose conflicts of interest;
- Advising on outside activity requests, gifts and honors, relatives in the workplace and other potential conflicts of interest (IN/15 Rev. 1 and IN/161 Rev. 1);
- Raising ethics awareness through proactive training and communication;
- Developing new policies and providing support, as necessary, on existing policies that pertain to ethical behavior and standards of conduct;
- Providing guidance on enquiries related to the Standards of Conduct.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

Figure 1 summarizes the activities carried out by ECO from 1 January to 31 December 2021 (for more details on each activity, see the separate sections below). It is worth noting that ECO noticed a substantial increase in all activities compared to 2020, stemming mainly from the increase in disclosure of conflicts of interest and requests for outside activities. Retaliation-related inquiries also increased in 2021.

Figure 1: Breakdown of 2021 Activities



DEVELOPMENT OF NEW POLICIES

Based on a recommendation from the External Auditors to IOM Management in 2018 regarding the need to introduce internal procedures for disclosing staff financial interests, ECO developed, in coordination with the Office of Legal Affairs (LEG), Human Resources Management (HRM) and Finance and Accounting Division (ACO), a Yearly Declaration of Interest form to be filed by certain categories of staff in line with the practice of other UN organizations. The Yearly Declaration of Interest process, which includes Financial Disclosure, was approved by the DG in March 2021, and was implemented for the first time in 2021, covering calendar year 2020.

In 2021, ECO continued the coordination for the finalization of IN/282, IOM's "*Policy for Protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct or cooperating with investigations and audits*". ECO held regular meetings with the working group consisting of HRM, LEG, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and the Office of the Ombudsperson (OOM) to finalize the draft for the new policy, which was further coordinated with the Global Staff Association Committee (GSAC). At the end of the year the final draft of the policy was shared with ODG. The policy has since been presented to the Executive Committee. It has been translated into French and Spanish and is ready to be issued.

In addition, ECO continued its participation in the working group for the revision of IN/90, with HRM, LEG, OIG and OOM. The working group finalized the draft of the revised policy and developed accompanying guidelines.

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

The Head of ECO participated in regular meetings with the network of Ethics officers of other UN Organizations. Meetings were held to discuss the draft report by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) regarding the current state of the Ethics function in the United Nations.

ECO officers took part in the 13th Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations (ENMO) annual meeting held online from 7-8 July 2021 and 17-18 November 2021, hosted by the European Central Bank. The agenda covered various topics, such as the ethical challenges and risks due to teleworking and the “new normal” including ethics and compliance (conflicts of interests, outside activities, information security and protection, and use of institutional resources), and operational concerns. The discussions further included the personal use of social media sites and associated ethical risks. In the framework of organizational culture, the Organizations exchanged experiences about internal speak-up culture and how to promote and measure the workplace climate as well as addressing discrimination and racism.

Liaison with other UN agencies: Through ENMO contacts, exchanges were held with WIPO and IAEA on the topics of financial disclosure methods and protection against retaliation.

OFFICE STRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

The Office of Ethics and Conduct comprises of two positions: a Head of Ethics and an Ethics and Integrity Officer. In addition, a second Ethics and Integrity Officer and an Associate Ethics Officer support the Office. During 2021, ECO released one of the Ethics and Integrity Officers to work on the Afghan crisis response in the USA.

ECO receives queries from missions worldwide on all matters related to the Standards of Conduct, IN/15 Rev. 1, particularly on conflicts of interest.

ECO continued to participate with OIG and GCU in the management of the *We Are All In* platform, as well as in the IOM Headquarters Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse working group.

The ECO team has developed extensive online training in English, French, Spanish languages plus Arabic. ECO is constantly reviewing its training methods and adapting it to the needs of missions worldwide in the three IOM official languages and collaborating closely with other units such as OOM, GCU, OIG and HRM, to ensure IOM staff are better able to understand and apply policies and guidelines on ethics and conduct in their daily work.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

1. Conflicts of Interest

1.a Advising on outside activities

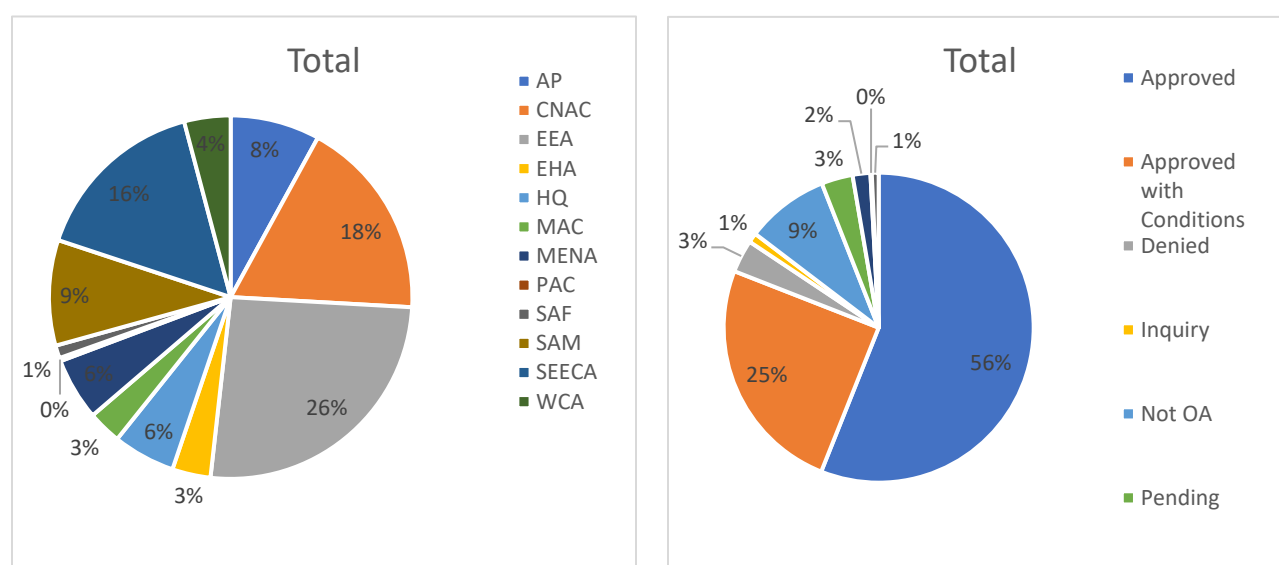
Art. 5.45 and 5.46 of the Standards of Conduct state that *“International Civil Servants should devote their energies fully to the work of IOM. Therefore, it is improper for IOM staff members to engage without prior authorization in any outside activity, whether remunerated or not, that interferes with the obligations or is incompatible with their status. ECO shall decide whether the undertaking of such office or employment*

is compatible with the proper discharge of the duties of the staff member with the Organization [...] Activities such as teaching or producing books or articles for publication on matters of official concern are governed by this same consideration and are to be approved, in advance, by the Office of the Director General through the Ethics and Conduct Office (ECO)”.

Total Inquiries Processed

In 2021 ECO received **703** outside activities requests from personnel representing 3% of all IOM personnel worldwide, one percent more than last year. IOM personnel from the European Economic Area, the Central and North American and Caribbean, and the South-East, Europe, East Europe and Central Asia regions reported the most outside activities, while only 8 staff from the Southern Africa Region and 2 from the Panama Administer Centre reported these activities.

Figure 2: Details of Outside Activities (OAs)



Actions Taken by ECO

Of the 703 requests, ECO approved **569**, representing 81% of all submissions. Of these 569 approvals, 175 required additional measures to mitigate any conflicts of interest that might arise during these outside activities.

ECO denied 4% of the requests, due to the fact that these activities involved elements that were contrary to the IOM Standards of Conduct. Most of the activities involved academic, business or one-time activities. A small number of requests were still pending or under consideration at the end of the year.

Notable Trends

ECO observed a considerable increase in requests amounting to **77%**, in contrast to last year when many activities were paused or reduced due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. ECO believes that this high increase in requests is due to the reactivation of activities globally, as well as to the increase of 63% in IOM personnel attending ECO's training sessions in 2021, during which a strategic focus is given to the observance of the mandatory requirements detailed in Articles 5.45 and 5.46 of the Standards of Conduct.

1.b Advising on Relatives in the Workplace

On 20 January 2020, IN/161, Rev. 1 - *Close Relatives in the Workplace* was issued, describing the applicable rules on recruitment and placement of relatives in IOM in order to avoid any risk of perception of favoritism, nepotism, actual or perceived family influence or conflict of interest, in accordance with IN/15 Rev.1, the Standards of Conduct. The instruction applies to all IOM personnel employed by or working for IOM worldwide, whether internationally or locally recruited, regardless of the type or duration of the contract, including interns, secondees, consultants, escorts and individuals holding hourly contracts.

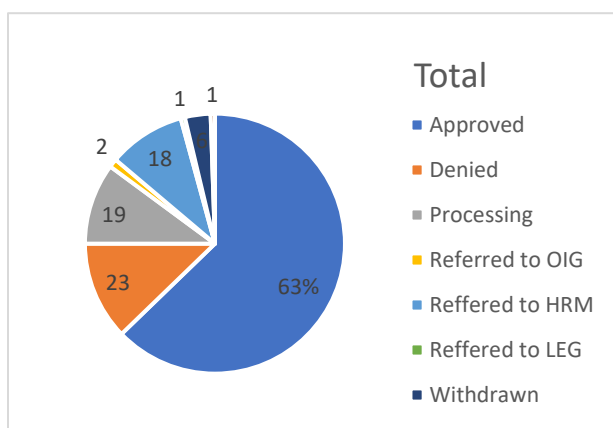
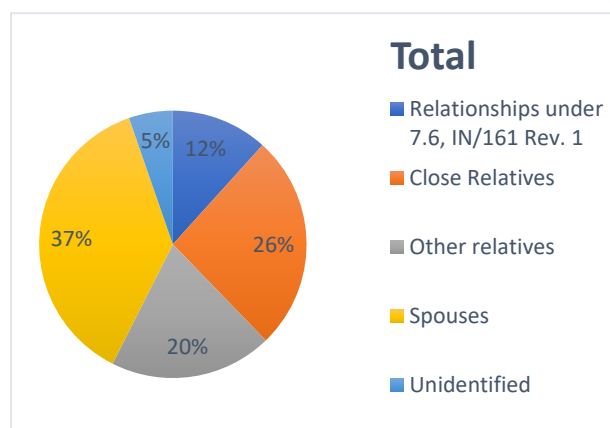
The instruction requires that all new applicants should report within their selection process any close relative, other relative or spouse who works for IOM, a donor, vendor, government, third party contractor or any other organization associated with IOM.

Similarly, existing IOM personnel are required to disclose to their respective supervisors and HR Focal Point as soon as they become aware that a close relative, other relative, or spouse has applied, been selected, or holds any position at IOM, regardless of the type or duration of the contract.

Likewise, all IOM personnel are required to declare to ECO any personal relationship that could lead to a conflict of interest. In this regard, ECO would advise whether, depending on the individual circumstances, such relationship would need to be disclosed formally.

Total Inquiries Processed

During the reporting period, ECO reviewed **188** family cases from IOM personnel worldwide regarding the recruitment and placement of IOM personnel to whom IN/161 Rev. 1. applies. Of these 188 new cases, 62% were approved, 12% were denied and 10% were referred to HRM and HR-PAC for final determination. The remaining cases were either referred to other units or the Missions withdrew their initial requests.



ECO also worked closely with REC-MAC in **86** selection processes regarding candidates with declared family relationships within the Organization and completed **51** pending evaluations of cases declared in 2020.

Notable Trends

ECO noted that the majority of family relationships at IOM continue to be that of *spouses*, as was the case last year, while personal relationships established in section 7.6 of IN/161 Rev.1 increased considerably (12% of the cases). ECO believes that the latter number is likely linked to the communication and confidential advice that ECO provided following the trainings that it offered throughout the year.

Most of the cases reviewed were from the Middle East and North Africa and European Economic Area regions, while the Southern Africa region and MAC only reported 6 and 4 cases, respectively. ECO urges all missions to declare this type of conflict in the early stages of any recruitment.

1.c Advising on Gifts and Honours

Every year ECO reminds colleagues that, according to the Standards of Conduct, receiving a gift in connection with work can create or appear to create an obligation to the staff member receiving the gift. To avoid such situations, staff members are not allowed to receive gifts in their official capacity.

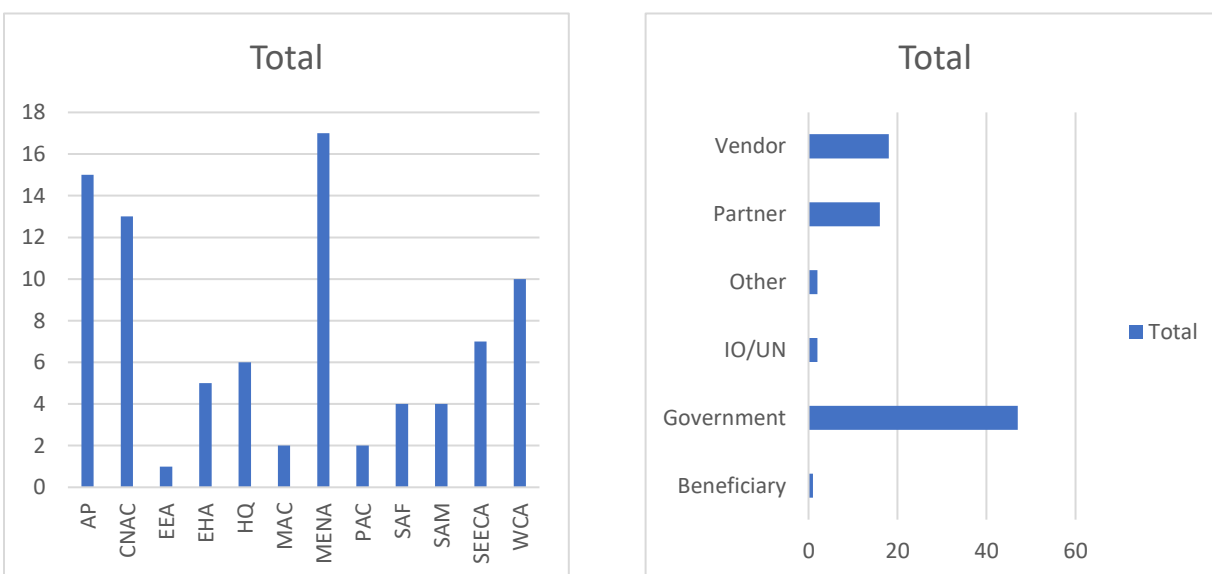
Gifts received on behalf of IOM should be promptly declared to ECO. Guidance about gifts may be found in IOM's Standards of Conduct (IN/15, Rev. 1) and the Unified Staff Regulations and Rules (Reg. 1.6).

Total Inquiries Processed

During the reporting period, ECO handled **86** declarations of gifts and honors—twice as many as last year.

The region submitting the most declarations was the Middle East and North Africa, followed by the Central and North America and Caribbean regions. It should be noted that for the European Economic Area, ECO received only one declaration.

Figure 3: Details of Gifts and Honors Declarations



Actions Taken by ECO

Most gifts were of nominal value and approved by ECO at a rate of 94%. ECO denied or provided advice on the remaining 6%. Similar to the trend in past years, most of the gifts were given by governmental institutions, and the gifts that were rejected were due to the fact that they were provided by vendors or their value far exceeded the nominal value stated.

2. Assessing allegations of retaliation

According to IN/90, *“Retaliation means any direct or indirect detrimental action recommended, threatened or taken because an individual raises concerns, makes a complaint or assists in providing information about harassment or abuse of authority. Retaliation could occur because a staff member has reported an irregular practice, wrongdoing or misconduct. Proven cases of retaliation against staff will be treated as a separate case of misconduct and will be subject to disciplinary action”*.

ECO is mandated with receiving allegations of retaliation while all other allegations of misconduct are handled by OIG (IN/275). Staff members may submit a complaint of retaliation by contacting ECO in writing, or by using the online platform www.weareallin.iom.int. Upon receipt of a retaliation complaint, ECO conducts a preliminary assessment. If ECO finds *prima facie* evidence of retaliation, it sends the complaint to OIG for investigation.

During the reporting period, ECO received 24 complaints of retaliation. 2 complaints were from HQ, while the rest came from IOM Missions or Regional Offices. The region with the highest number of complaints was MENA (7 complaints), followed by SEECA and WCA (4 complaints each). In almost half of the cases (46%) the type of alleged retaliatory action was the abolition of post and/or non-extension of contract while 17% of the cases concerned non-selection or other actions affecting employment conditions. 37% of the complaints were about other types of actions including unwelcome behaviour.

In reviewing retaliation complaints, ECO conducts a preliminary assessment to determine whether there is *prima facie* evidence of retaliation. If ECO determines this to be the case, it refers the matter to OIG for investigation and notifies the complainant accordingly. ECO found *prima facie* evidence in 1 case and referred it to OIG. 17 cases were closed following ECO’s preliminary assessment, and in 6 cases the complainants abandoned their claims.

If necessary, ECO may recommend temporary measures, to protect complainants from retaliation. ECO recommended temporary protective measures in 1 case where it determined that there was a high risk of retaliation. The protective measures were applied by the Chief of Mission in coordination with HRM.

ECO offers confidential and impartial advice about the definition of retaliation and which mechanisms are available to staff to address their concerns. Staff raising concerns other than retaliation are referred, as appropriate, to the OOM, LEG, HRM and OIG. If ECO becomes aware of an immediate risk to the safety and security of the complainant, ECO either notifies the IOM Office of Staff Security (OSS) or advises the complainant to do so directly. ECO also refers staff to the Staff Welfare Officer (SWO) in cases of stress or other mental health issues. During the reporting period, ECO handled 7 general enquiries regarding retaliation.

As noted above, ECO drafted and coordinated a policy on protection against retaliation, which aims at encouraging the reporting of suspected misconduct and providing an enhanced framework for reporting

retaliation and dealing with complaints of retaliation. It will be the first time that IOM will have a separate policy on protection against retaliation. In 2021, ECO developed useful tools, such as Standard Operating Procedures and forms to facilitate the processing of cases. ECO is also in the process of developing awareness raising materials regarding the new policy, IN/282, including a specialized training.

3. Awareness Raising and Training Activities

Raising awareness of IOM's policies on ethical conduct is one of ECO's major activities. In view of the continued challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020, ECO carried on with its webinar trainings offered in the three IOM official languages.


Online Training

The ECO e-learning training, Ethics and Conduct at IOM: *The Values We Share*, has been ongoing since 2017. The course, available in English, French and Spanish, is based on the Standards of Conduct (IN/15 Rev. 1) and seeks to build understanding on why integrity and ethical conduct are important for IOM and its staff. It also promotes awareness of our responsibility to uphold IOM standards in our day-to-day work with beneficiaries, partners and colleagues. After completing this course, learners can better recognize, prevent, and address misconduct. The training is mandatory for all IOM staff and non-staff members.

In 2021, ECO completed the update of the online training to reflect *inter alia* the change in its mandate since the implementation of IN/275. In March 2021, all ethics modules were updated demonstrating this replacement.

ECO also initiated a new Arabic version of the mandatory course, which after numerous internal revisions, is expected to be officially launched in early 2022.

According to the latest report provided by I-Learn in December 2021, as of 31 December 2021, a total of 11,394 staff members had completed the training since its inception, while approximately 600 others were in progress.

 Table 1: Ethics & Conduct at IOM Active I-Learn Accounts vs. Total Completions Per Region data coverage: start - 17 December 2021				
Regions	No. of Completions	No. of Active User per Region	% Overall Compliance Rate	% Compliance Rate Per Region
HQ-Geneva	306	525	1.8%	58.3%
Panama Administrative Center	50	55	0.3%	90.9%
Manila Administrative Center	428	463	2.5%	92.4%
Asia and the Pacific COs	1687	2509	9.9%	67.2%
Central America, Nth America & Carib CC	853	1274	5.0%	67.0%
Central and West Africa COs	1126	2059	6.6%	54.7%
East and Horn of Africa COs	1345	2298	7.9%	58.5%
Eastern & SE Europe & Central Asia COs	1183	1611	6.9%	73.4%
European Economic Area COs	2018	2567	11.8%	78.6%
Middle East and North Africa COs	1154	1886	6.8%	61.2%
South America COs	913	1114	5.4%	82.0%
Southern Africa COs	331	671	1.9%	49.3%
Total	11394	17032	67%	

Face-to-face Training

To complement the online training, ECO has successfully offered face-to-face training, called “*Let’s Talk Ethics*”, on the Standards of Conduct since 2016.

Due to travel restrictions in place for most of 2021 resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, ECO was able to provide only one face-to-face training, which was held at the IOM Greece Mission for 49 IOM personnel.

Remote Training

In 2021, ECO continued delivering its 3-hour “*Let’s Talk Ethics*” webinar, which, due to its success and accessibility for IOM missions worldwide, was attended by over **3900** personnel, representing 63% more participants than last year. ECO delivered 22 sessions in English, Spanish and French reaching out to a broad audience in IOM.

It is worth mentioning that this year, in addition to the interactive activities already incorporated in the webinars, ECO added a new question and answer section in order to strengthen the voice of the participants and offer clarification on ethical issues.

Other Awareness Raising Activities

In addition to the trainings, and to raise awareness about ethical issues among IOM personnel, ECO developed a video on the Standards of Conduct in collaboration with IOM El Salvador, which is expected to be released in the three IOM official languages in the first semester of 2022.

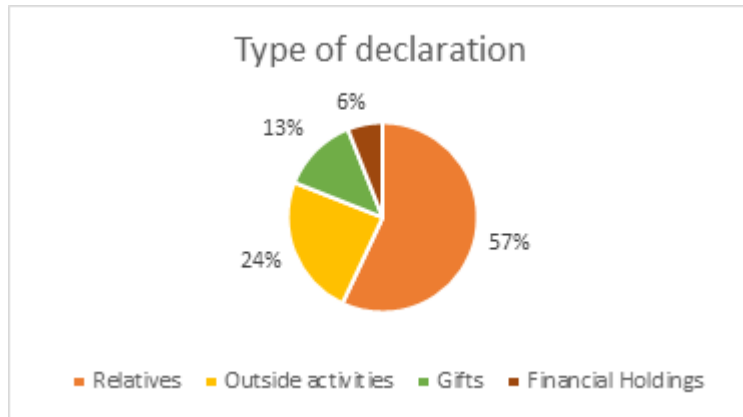
4. Yearly Declaration of Interest (YDI) process

The Yearly Declaration of Interest process, implemented for the first time in 2021, served as a reminder to certain categories of staff members that possible conflicts of interest should be disclosed and appropriately addressed. ECO circulated the YDI form to staff members at D1 level and above, Heads of Department, Heads of Division, Chiefs of Mission/Heads of Office and SRMOs/RMOs.

By completing the Declaration of Interest form, concerned staff were given an opportunity to affirm their compliance with the Unified Staff Regulations and Rules and the Standards of Conduct (IN/15, Rev.1) in respect of outside employment and activities; financial holdings; gifts, honours and remuneration from outside sources; and relatives in the workplace.

The YDI form for calendar year 2020 was circulated to **382** concerned staff in March 2021. ECO received **375** declarations. Out of the 7 staff members who did not respond, 4 staff members were no longer with IOM and 2 were on prolonged leave.

Of the **375** staff members who filed their YDI form, **89** staff members declared possible and/or actual conflicts of interests. Certain staff members declared more than one category of conflict of interest. In total, ECO received 57 declarations about relatives, 24 declarations about outside activities, 13 declarations about gifts and honours, and 6 declarations regarding financial holdings.



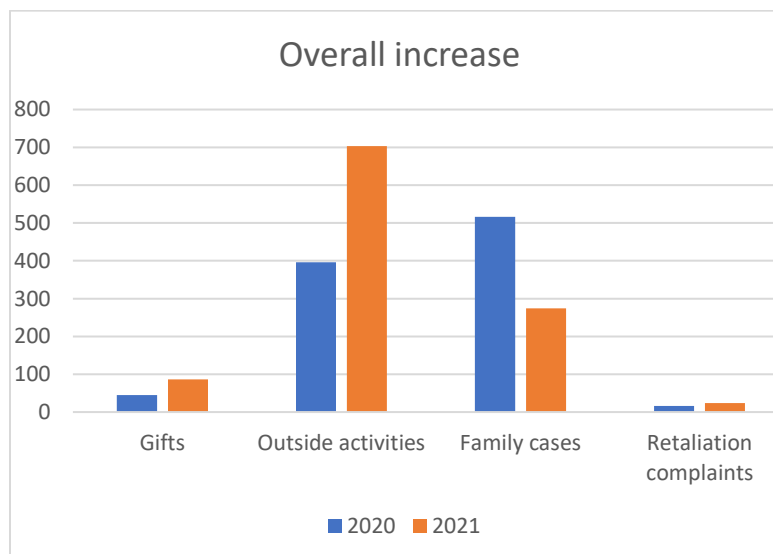
ECO assessed the declarations in a confidential manner, advising on ways to mitigate any real or perceived conflict of interest. ECO completed the YDI process, including all assessments in the first half of the year.

5. General Inquiries

ECO is contacted daily by IOM personnel and persons external to IOM with queries or concerns of a general nature. In 2021, ECO dealt with **177** general queries. Of those, 33 were matters pertaining to IN/15 Rev. 1 - IOM Standards of Conduct, including public expression on controversial matters, use of social media, disclosure of confidential data, recruitment of governmental staff and collaborations with academic partners. Additionally, 49 were matters relating to a respectful working environment, where ECO advised IOM personnel of the available channels to address their concerns. The remaining general queries were responded to by ECO or referred to the appropriate office, accordingly.

CONCLUSION

ECO noted a *significant* increase in almost all its activities, as can be seen from the overall graph below:



The decrease in number of family cases was to be expected as the revision of the policy IN/161 was issued in 2020. In 2021 and following years it is expected that the numbers of IOM personnel declaring close relatives will decrease and be limited to recruitment of new staff and placement of existing IOM personnel.

In 2022 ECO will continue to promote ethical awareness and compliance across the Organization to ensure standards of integrity are followed, in line with the IOM Standards of Conduct.

The strong emphasis on addressing the issue of retaliation will continue, with an effort to raise awareness among colleagues on what retaliation is, and what measures must be taken against it. As soon as the new policy IN/282 is issued, ECO will implement updated training and promote awareness raising materials regarding retaliation organization wide. Moreover, ECO is planning to develop micro-learning modules on retaliation.

ECO will continue the successful Teams training sessions that it initiated in 2020, with a view to reaching colleagues in all three official languages of the Organizations. Also, once the pandemic situation permits, it is ECO's intention to continue with targeted face-to-face training sessions, subject to availability of resources.

Finally, in 2022 ECO will start the process of updating IN/15, Rev. 1, which is expected to be coordinated with the relevant units.

ANNEX I

Charter of the Office of Ethics and Conduct (ECO)

I. Introduction

1.1 This Charter provides the framework for the function of the IOM Office of Ethics and Conduct (ECO). ECO was established in 2014 in line with the Director General's commitment towards professionalism, accountability and transparency, and with a view to uphold IOM's fundamental principle of "integrity", as enshrined in the IOM Constitution (Article 15).

1.2 ECO is an integral part of the Office of the Director General (ODG) and reports to the Director General.

II. Mandate and functions

2.1 ECO's mandate is to promote ethical awareness and compliance, and ensure that the IOM rules, policies and procedures follow the standards of integrity called for in the IOM Standards of Conduct (IN/15 Rev.1), including protection of staff against retaliation for reporting misconduct.

2.2 ECO's activities include:

- Assessing all allegations of retaliation and ensuring protection against retaliation in accordance with the applicable procedures (IN/90, IN/275 and IN/282);
- Advising on outside activities, gifts and honours, relatives in the workplace and other potential conflicts of interest (IN/15 Rev.1 and IN/161 Rev.1);
- Raising ethics awareness through proactive training and communication;
- Providing recommendations on submissions from senior managers and other relevant staff on conflict of interest disclosure obligations;
- Developing new policies and providing support as necessary on existing policies that pertain to ethical behaviour and standards of conduct; and
- Providing guidance on enquiries related to the standards of conduct.

2.3 ECO makes recommendations to the Director General, Deputy Director General, and senior management on all matters related to ethics or those derived from its activities.

III. Enabling Environment

3.1 IOM is committed to fostering an organizational culture of ethics and an inclusive and harmonious work environment. The IOM senior management adheres to ethical principles,

recognizes, and supports ECO as a key institutional function for achieving results and accountability. The IOM senior management ensures that rules, policies, and procedures are adopted that provide for the independent and efficient functioning of ECO.

IV. Principles

4.1 ECO carries out its functions under the principles of objectivity, impartiality, independence, confidentiality, and fairness. ECO conducts its activities with the highest levels of competence and integrity.

Independence

4.2 ECO is functionally independent, exercises its judgement independently and operates without interference from parties internal or external to the Organization, without improper influence or external control and risk of retaliation.

4.3 Ethics Officers conduct their work impartially, without the risk of adverse effects on their contracts or career development and are able to express freely their opinion. The independence of ECO requires access to information. In order to effectively carry out its functions, ECO may request this information from the appropriate units.

4.4 ECO has full access to senior management in the Organization and is available to the Organization's governing body, if required.

Conflict of Interest

4.5 Ethics Officers must not engage in any situation which could create a potential conflict of interest. Ethics Officers should not have a personal stake in the resolution of any issue brought to the office, either in view of a previous involvement in the matter or a personal interest.

4.6 Ethics Officers shall disclose to the Head of ECO in a timely fashion any actual or potential conflict of interest they may have in an activity in which they are participating or situation where they are asked for advice. In such cases, the Head of ECO will recommend appropriate action to address the conflict as necessary.

4.7 The Head of ECO shall disclose any actual or perceived conflict of interest that may arise in the performance of their function to the Director General.

Confidentiality

4.8 ECO respects the rights of individuals to provide information and seek guidance in confidence, while making them aware of the scope and limits of confidentiality. ECO should obtain consent from the individuals prior to sharing any confidential information.

4.9 ECO ensures that sensitive data is protected and safeguards any non-public information associated with its functions, in compliance with the Organization's rules, policies and procedures.

V. Reporting

5.1 An annual report highlighting the activities of the ECO is available to all staff of the Organization.