



ETHICS NETWORK OF MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR ETHICS FUNCTIONS

7 April 2025

1. Preamble

As stipulated in its Charter, the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations (ENMO) brings together senior professionals responsible for the ethics function who work jointly to attain the highest standards of integrity in their member organizations. This is achieved by promoting best practices to foster a culture of ethics, transparency and accountability, which are key to good governance and maintaining the trust of stakeholders.

To fulfill its mission, ENMO strives to broaden the knowledge of its members, enhance the professional capacity of its respective ethics functions and promote good standards of practice in its member organizations. As a result of these collaborative efforts, ENMO members are able to strengthen their respective ethics functions and promote a consistent application of ethical principles. In recognition of the value of harmonizing practices among member organizations to the extent possible, ENMO has developed these Standards of Practice for the ethics function in its member organizations (henceforth the “Standards”).

While these Standards are designed to have broad relevance to the ethics function of ENMO member organizations and serve as a useful point of reference, they are not intended to bind member organizations or impose any additional duties, rights, or obligations. Consequently, each member organization retains the prerogative and discretion to apply its own rules, policies and practices to ensure an ethics function best suited for its specific mandate.

For the purpose of these Standards, the term “Organization” refers to each ENMO member organization, and the ethics function of each organization is referred to as the “Ethics Office”.

2. General principles

1. Each Organization should have a dedicated Ethics Office to provide guidance and advice to personnel and to support the Organization's leadership in instilling and nurturing an ethical culture, promoting integrity and accountability, and fostering a speak-up culture to enhance the trust and credibility of the Organization.
2. Each Ethics Office should have the requisite independence and authority to perform its functions free from interference or influence from internal or external parties. In particular, the Ethics Office should perform its duties with organizational and operational independence.
3. Each Ethics Office is expected to maintain objectivity, impartiality, fairness, and confidentiality when carrying out its duties and responsibilities, exercise professional judgment, and conduct its activities with the highest level of competence and integrity.
4. Each Ethics Office should be allocated adequate resources to effectively perform its functions.

3. Responsibilities

1. The Ethics Office plays a central role in shaping and prioritizing an ethical culture in the Organization and raising awareness of the standards of conduct and expected behaviors of personnel to enhance knowledge and promote adherence and accountability.
2. The mandate and scope of work of the Ethics Office generally includes:
 - Providing guidance and advice to senior leadership on organizational ethics that could have an impact on the trust, credibility, and reputation of the Organization;
 - Providing guidance and advice to managers and other personnel so that they can integrate ethical decision-making into their daily work and can effectively navigate ethical dilemmas;
 - Establishing, recommending, and/or promoting core values, principles, and policies to guide personnel on proper ethical conduct that aligns with the Organization's standards and mission;
 - Assessing, advising, and recommending mitigating measures to address conflicts of interest, including through self-reporting by personnel and financial disclosure and/or declaration of interest programs;
 - Fostering open communication and a speak-up culture and facilitating opportunities for personnel to report ethical concerns or suspected misconduct without fear of retaliation;
 - Developing and implementing training and outreach programs aimed at enhancing awareness of ethics-related policies and standards of conduct and engaging in joint training initiatives with other offices and partners in cross-cutting areas;

- Implementing, recommending and/or promoting safeguards to protect personnel from retaliation for reporting suspected misconduct or cooperating in an investigation or audit; and
 - Serving in an advisory role on internal committees and working groups.
3. Depending on the mandate of the Ethics Office in each Organization and bearing in mind the evolving nature of the function and the availability of resources, an Ethics Office may also undertake other responsibilities to the extent they are compatible with its independent role.

4. General standards

1. The Ethics Office should have its mandate/terms of reference approved by the Organization's leadership, articulating the authority and scope of work of the Ethics Office. The mandate/terms of reference should be published and made available to personnel.
2. While maintaining necessary confidentiality, each Ethics Office should prepare an annual report to the Organization's board of directors and/or governing bodies highlighting the work of the Ethics Office, its achievements, projected activities, and any further measures to strengthen the Organization's ethical culture. This report should be published and disseminated to all personnel in the Organization.
3. Through periodic briefings and reports, the Ethics Office should inform the Organization's leadership of systemic issues and important undertakings, their outcomes, and any issues that warrant attention.
4. Senior leaders, managers and other personnel of the Organization should be required to acknowledge at prescribed intervals that they have complied with the established ethical values, principles, and standards of conduct.
5. All personnel should be given the opportunity to freely solicit guidance and advice from the Ethics Office and should be required to cooperate with the activities of the Ethics Office whenever necessary.
6. All personnel should be required to report any known or suspected violations of the Organization's ethical standards and principles through the designated reporting channels without interference, fear of retaliation, or other forms of reprisal.
7. Ethics Office personnel should possess the requisite qualifications, skills, and competencies to successfully carry out their functions and have appropriate access to continuing learning and professional education.
8. The Ethics Office should carry out and/or support periodic assessments of the Organization's ethical climate, including through surveys to measure the impact of the Ethics Office's services and the overall ethical climate in the Organization.

9. The Ethics Office should carry out and/or support periodic ethical risk assessments to identify and analyze relevant risk factors and their potential impact on the Organization's mission, goals, and reputation and determine how those risks should be managed and mitigated.
10. The Ethics Office is encouraged to consult and collaborate with other organizations, international institutions, and other relevant parties to exchange ideas, practical experiences, and insights on how best to address issues of mutual interest. The Ethics Office may also assist other ethics offices, including carrying out peer reviews.
11. To enhance its effectiveness, the Ethics Office should stay up to date on current developments, best practices, and emerging trends in the ethics field.

5. Enabling environment

1. The Ethics Office requires an enabling environment that includes an institutional culture that values the Organization's ethical principles as a basis for integrity, transparency, accountability, and good governance. The success of the Ethics Office depends on a firm and visible commitment from the Organization's leadership to adhere to ethical principles and set the tone from the top, as well as recognition and support for the Ethics Office as a key institutional resource.
2. The Ethics Office should support the efforts of the Organization to establish comprehensive ethics-related policies, including but not limited to a code of ethical conduct and policies aimed at preventing and responding to sexual misconduct, harassment, discrimination, abuse of authority, retaliation, fraud, corruption, and conflicts of interest, and ensuring asset protection and the responsible use of social media and artificial intelligence. These policies should be made available to personnel in all official languages of the Organization.
3. The Ethics Office should have the authority to develop new policies and update existing policies relevant to its core work and contribute to other policies that include components of ethical behavior, taking into consideration the recommendations of internal and external oversight bodies, new developments and emerging trends.
4. Creating an enabling environment entails adopting rules, policies, and procedures that provide for the independent and efficient functioning of the Ethics Office. It also requires proper office infrastructure and adequate financial resources and staffing to carry out its activities effectively and efficiently, including training, awareness raising, visits to regional and country offices, and outreach programs.
5. Personnel and external parties should have access to an effective reporting mechanism, including anonymous reporting, allowing allegations of misconduct and other suspected ethical violations to be submitted through the designated channels.

6. Independence

1. To fulfill its mandate, an Ethics Office should be independent and have the authority to perform its functions free of interference or influence from internal or external parties. The Ethics Office's independence is critical and comprises two key aspects:
 - (i) organizational independence, which relates to the location of the Ethics Office within the Organization, its reporting lines, and access to leadership and governance; and
 - (ii) operational independence.
2. The Ethics Office's organizational independence requires that it reports to the highest level of authority within the Organization and have direct and unfettered access to the Organization's board of directors and/or governing bodies, the freedom to set and manage its work plan, and adequate support to conduct its work effectively.
3. The Ethics Office's operational independence means it can operate without undue influence or pressure from any party. Its personnel must be free to conduct their work impartially, without the risk of adverse effects on their contracts, performance evaluation, or career development, and be able to express their opinion and assessment freely. In addition, the independence of the Ethics Office requires unfettered access to the information sources needed to effectively carry out its assigned duties and responsibilities.
4. Ethics Office personnel should not hold any other position or function within the Organization that might conflict with their role or work, or compromise their independence, impartiality or objectivity, or the appearance thereof.
5. The Head of the Ethics Office should have the authority to select, supervise and evaluate the Ethics Office's personnel and manage its budget and operations.
6. To ensure accountability and effective performance, the Ethics Office should prepare an annual work plan, report on its achievements and challenges, and regularly obtain input from stakeholders.
7. The Head of the Ethics Office should not be removed or suspended without just cause, due process and prior consultation with the Organization's board of directors, governing body and/or independent oversight committee.
8. Additional measures may be implemented by the Organization, as deemed appropriate, to further strengthen the independence of the Ethics Office and enable it to carry out its mandate with objectivity and impartiality. Such measures may include provisions governing the duration of appointments and post-employment conditions.

7. Impartiality

The key elements of impartiality are objectivity, professional integrity, and absence of bias or undue pressure. Ethics Office personnel must be free from any personal, external, or organizational conflict of interest that could impair their independence or impartiality. They

should immediately notify their supervisor of any conflict of interest they may have in relation to their work, and the supervisor should take timely and appropriate action to address the conflict, including recusal, if necessary.

8. Sharing of information and confidentiality

1. Within the scope and limits of confidentiality, the Ethics Office should take reasonable measures to protect any confidential or privileged information or sensitive data obtained during the course of its work, including the identities of parties who have approached the Ethics Office for confidential guidance and advice.
2. Ethics Office personnel should not be required by any official or body to submit to an interview or testify about any confidential matters or information brought to their attention in the discharge of their official duties, but may voluntarily disclose information on a need-to-know basis.

9. Review and amendment

In view of the continually evolving nature of the ethics function and to ensure that these Standards remain pertinent and continue to reflect best practices and lessons learned, as well as the recommendations of internal and external oversight bodies, these Standards should regularly be reviewed by the Governance Committee. Draft amendments will be submitted by the Executive Committee for adoption by the membership in accordance with the ENMO Charter.

10. Publication

These Standards may be published by the Organization in accordance with its policies on the disclosure and dissemination of information.

Annex - Best Practices

Best practices are constantly evolving. They include, but are not limited to:

- Maintaining and publishing a Code of Ethics or Code of Conduct to guide personnel;
- Mainstreaming ethical considerations on matters such as prevention of harassment, sexual misconduct, abuse of authority, discrimination, conflicts of interest, fraud, bribery/corruption, and protection from retaliation;
- Playing a substantive role in promoting a speak-up culture and protecting personnel from retaliation;
- Implementing initial new hire and conflicts of interest disclosure programs;
- Carrying out regular mandatory new hire and refresher ethics training;
- Participating in senior management discussions, either actively or as an observer, with a view of understanding the Organization's challenges and initiatives;
- Conducting periodic ethical climate and awareness surveys;
- Developing regular and impactful ethics communications, awareness, and outreach activities;
- Participating in organizational policy development and standard-setting;
- Working in conjunction with management/operations and human resources, engaging in training efforts for new country office leaders, regional directors, bureau heads, and new executive board members where relevant;
- Engaging in joint training and awareness-raising initiatives with other relevant offices and partners to promote a safe, inclusive, and respectful workplace and address other cross-cutting areas;
- Collaborating with colleagues responsible for the internal justice system of the Organization, with due respect for confidentiality.