

## **WIPO Coordination Committee**

### **Seventy-First (46th Ordinary) Session Geneva, October 5 to 14, 2015**

#### **ANNUAL REPORT BY THE ETHICS OFFICE**

*Document prepared by the Secretariat*

1. The following is a report on the activities of the WIPO Ethics Office in 2014.

#### **I. BACKGROUND**

2. The Convention Establishing the World Intellectual Property Organization refers to the importance for the Organization of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. The establishment of a comprehensive ethics and integrity system at WIPO is an initiative under the Strategic Realignment Program (SRP), which began to be mainstreamed into WIPO activities following the conclusion of the SRP in early 2013.

#### **II. STRUCTURE**

3. The Ethics Office is headed by the Chief Ethics Officer, who currently reports to the Director General (formerly he reported to the Chief of Staff in the Office of the Director General). Its activities fall into four main areas:
  - (a) promotional activities;
  - (b) confidential advice to senior management, managers and all staff members;
  - (c) norm-setting and policy development; and
  - (d) implementation of policies assigned to the Ethics Office.
4. The Office is independent of WIPO's other services.

### III. PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

#### (a) Ethics and Integrity Training

5. Since the launch of the WIPO ethics and integrity policy in 2012, there has been mandatory training for all staff at every level of the Organization. The training program is managed by the Ethics Office in close collaboration with the Human Resources Management Department (HRMD) and the Project Management Office of the SRP, and is delivered by external trainers.

#### *Objectives*

6. The training is tailored to the Organization's values and its policies on ethical conduct, and is in line with good training practices and commonly recognized ethical principles. Specifically, it is designed to:

- enhance the culture of ethics;
- raise awareness across the Organization about principles, policies, tools and considerations relating to ethical behavior at WIPO;
- increase trust among colleagues and managers, and trust in the Organization;
- promote accountability in decision-making; and
- strengthen ethical leadership – “tone at the top”.

#### *Outcomes*

7. The desired outcomes are to:

- ensure a common understanding of the meaning of “ethics and integrity” in a professional setting, and of the importance of ethical conduct to the reputation of the Organization;
- ensure that all staff receive training in core ethical principles;
- promote a consistent message on ethics and expected standards of conduct in WIPO; and
- raise awareness about mechanisms that are in place to support personnel.

#### *Nature of the training*

8. The training consists of a review of ethical principles and values that apply at WIPO; an activity in which participants are presented with a series of case studies, and must identify ethical issues and work to resolve them using a decision-making model; an introduction to the Ethics Office, its activities and the services it provides to staff; and a discussion about common obstacles to behaving ethically, and how to address them. The training comprises a half-day of face-to-face sessions, led by external trainers with experience in providing ethics training in the United Nations (UN) common system. A competitive process was used to select the training provider.

*WIPO Code of Ethics as a learning reference*

9. The external provider and the Ethics Office developed a detailed Participant Guide, which each staff member receives in hard copy at the training session. The first half of the Guide is the workbook that participants use during the training, which contains key learning points and notes on the cases. The second half reproduces the complete Guide to Ethics at WIPO, prepared by the Ethics Office for use as a take-away reference. The WIPO Code of Ethics and the Guide to Ethics at WIPO were debuted through the training program, and providing personal copies of them to staff reinforces the institutional messages that they espouse.

*Impact, as measured by post-training survey*

10. All staff including new recruits (a total of 1,330 employees) have been trained since the launch of the WIPO ethics and integrity policy. The information below relates to the training provided to staff who joined the Organization in 2014.

11. As usual, an online survey was sent to those who had participated in the training. A total of 27 out of 51 participants responded – a response rate slightly above 50 per cent. The survey confirmed that the training had been well received, with 91 per cent of respondents finding the course content “mostly” or “highly” appropriate for WIPO staff (Table 1) and 96 per cent reporting that the course had “somewhat” or “considerably” improved their awareness of ethical issues faced at WIPO (Table 2). The vast majority (96 per cent) reported feeling “somewhat” or “considerably” better equipped to resolve ethical dilemmas that they might face in the future (Table 3).

Table 1 – “How would you rate the content of the Ethics training course?”

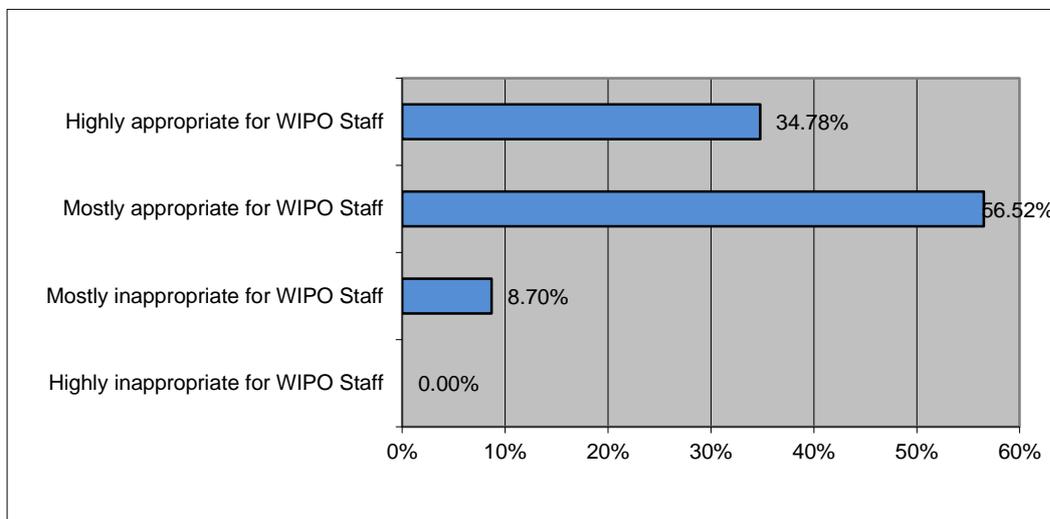


Table 2 – “The training improved my awareness of ethical issues we face at WIPO”

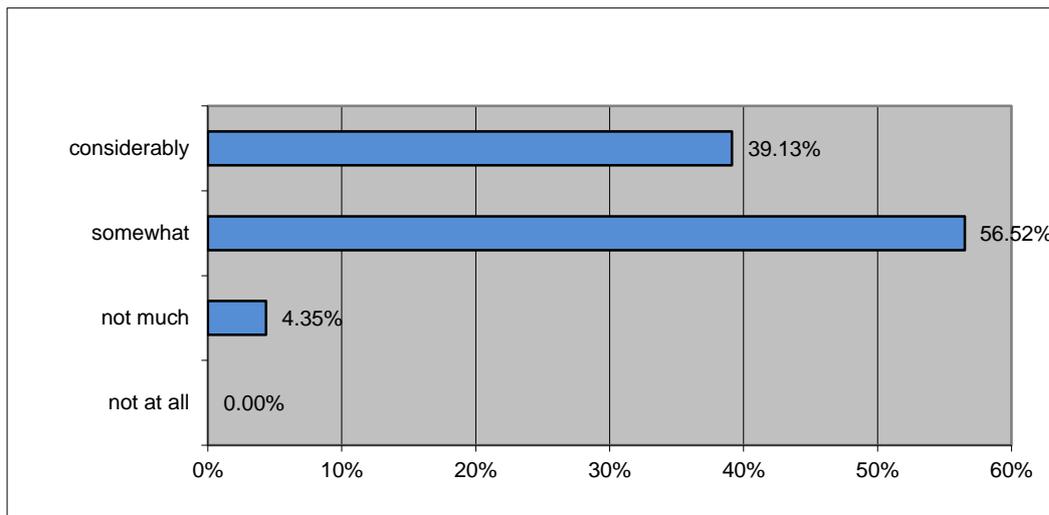
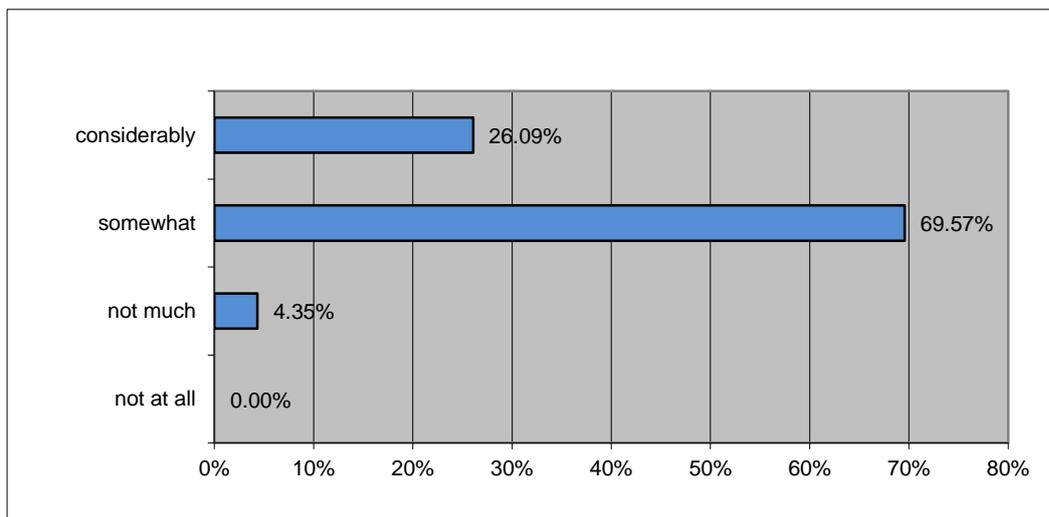


Table 3 – “If faced with an ethical dilemma, I feel \_\_\_\_\_ better equipped to resolve it”



*Key ideas taken away from the training*

12. Key ideas that survey respondents reported that they took away from the course included the following:

- Trust; integrity; honesty; objectivity; independence and impartiality; personal accountability; confidentiality; respect and tolerance for each other, particularly in a multicultural environment; transparency; and open communication are highly important.
- Ethics and integrity are cornerstones of professionalism, and are especially important for staff working for international organizations; individual responsibility and accountability are thus essential. Individual staff behavior should contribute to maintaining a harmonious and ethical working environment.

- Sometimes there are grey areas; ethical questions do not always have clear-cut answers. A whole set of principles and values shape ethical behavior. This justifies the presence of an impartial third party who can determine whether there has been a breach of the Code of Ethics.
- Structures and rules relating to ethical behavior and integrity are vital. WIPO procedures should be respected.
- There is the willingness in WIPO to move towards greater transparency. An ethical working environment fosters trust, and bolsters fair and impartial collaboration and teamwork, which help the whole Organization to achieve its objectives as regards transparency, honesty and integrity.

(b) Intranet site

13. A dedicated intranet site for the Ethics Office was created in 2012. The site contains the WIPO Code of Ethics, the Guide to Ethics at WIPO (which includes a compilation of relevant WIPO policies and principles, with clear explanations), as well as links to relevant resources and background information.

#### **IV. CONFIDENTIAL ADVICE TO SENIOR MANAGEMENT, MANAGERS AND ALL STAFF MEMBERS**

14. The Chief Ethics Officer was on sick leave from April 2014 and, most regrettably, passed away at the end of July. In August 2014, a Chief Ethics Officer was assigned on an *ad interim* basis, and was active for the remainder of the year.

15. During that period, the acting Chief Ethics Officer received the following requests for advice: seven on outside activities, two on gifts and/or hospitality, five on employment-related matters, three on declarations of interests/investments, eight on conflicts of interest and one on whistleblower protection. A number of other requests for advice fell outside the mandate of the Ethics Officer, and were therefore referred to other WIPO units.

#### **V. NORM-SETTING AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

##### Financial disclosure policy

16. Following the implementation in 2013 of the WIPO Declaration of Interest Policy, and the disclosure of financial interests in compliance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), further internal work was undertaken to develop a new financial disclosure policy for senior staff and other designated members of staff. This work was temporarily suspended in 2014 due to the regretted absence of the Chief Ethics Officer, and is now expected to be concluded in 2015 or 2016. The Organization intends to achieve the appropriate balance between the need for information and staff members' right to privacy. It will also seek to take account of the risk management framework and internal controls system that the Secretariat is currently implementing.

## VI. IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES ASSIGNED TO THE ETHICS OFFICE

### Whistleblower Protection Policy

17. The Whistleblower Protection Policy (WPP) has been in effect at WIPO since 2012.

18. The purpose of the WPP is twofold. Firstly, it establishes a duty to report suspected wrongdoing in a responsible way and sets out the reporting mechanisms in parallel with provisions in the Staff Regulations and Rules. Secondly, it provides protection for staff members who have made such reports or who participate in other oversight activities which are enumerated in the policy.

19. In 2014, two claims were received under the WPP for protection from retaliation for whistleblowing or participating in a protected activity. The Ethics Office conducted preliminary reviews, which were ongoing at the end of the reporting period. Over the previous years, there was one such claim in 2012, which was dealt with by the Ethics Office and satisfactorily resolved, and no claims were received in 2013. A low level of claims is consistent with the experience of other agencies such as the UN Secretariat.

### Declarations of interest and IPSAS-mandated disclosures of related party transactions

20. The WIPO Ethics Office is responsible for the implementation of the Declaration of Interest program for WIPO staff members at the level of D1 and above, and a limited number of other high-risk categories. Compliance with IPSAS has created additional disclosure requirements for staff members at the level of D2 and above. A 100 per cent rate of compliance with IPSAS disclosure requirements concerning related party transactions was achieved for the 2014 reporting period.

*21. The WIPO Coordination Committee is invited to take note of the "Annual Report by the Ethics Office" (document WO/CC/71/3 Rev.).*

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