



International
Labour
Organization

ILO Helpdesk for Business

**Update report on the expert advice service and
web site March 2022**

**ILO HELPDESK
FOR BUSINESS**
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ILO PROGRAMME TO PROVIDE COMPANIES WITH EXPERT ADVICE ON THE REALIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR STANDARDS AND THE MNE DECLARATION

Update report March 2022¹

The ILO Helpdesk for Business was established by the ILO Governing Body in 2007² and is one of the operational tools of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration). Since 2009 the Helpdesk answers individual questions on the application of the principles contained in international labour standards to company operations and the provisions of the MNE Declaration. The free and confidential service is operated by the Multinational and Enterprises Engagement Unit (MULTI).

The largest groups of users of the individual assistance service are companies, workers and their representatives and CSR initiatives (industry and multi-stakeholder). However, the Helpdesk has also assisted other groups, in particular inter-governmental organizations (mainly those concerned with trade, development and human rights), government agencies (concerning, e.g., development aid, procurement, export promotion, import requirements, CSR policies and national action plans on business and human rights) and employers' organizations. Other users include NGOs, journalists, consultants and academic researchers.

In October 2010 the Office launched the [Helpdesk for Business website](#) to provide a one-stop-shop for information, practical tools and upcoming training opportunities that are relevant to companies. It also posts answers to questions received that may be of interest to other users.³ More than 1.5 million users have now consulted the ILO Helpdesk for Business web site since its launch in 2010. The Q&A web pages are among the most consulted pages. The Office regularly updates the web site with new materials in light of new developments; for instance, a special COVID-19 section was created in 2020 to assist companies to locate relevant ILO tools and guidance concerning company responses to the pandemic. The Helpdesk website is available in English, French and Spanish; mirror sites exist in Japanese and Chinese and key pages were translated in Vietnamese. The web site received an average of 54,481 visits per month during the current reporting period and is now fast approaching 3 million page views.

The Office actively promotes the Helpdesk for Business. The service can be accessed through the [homepage of the ILO website](#) and is cross-linked from several thematic and department pages. The Office encourages constituents to use and promote the Helpdesk among enterprises as part of the overall promotional activities of the MNE Declaration, thus practically assisting enterprises in closer aligning their policies and practices with principles of international labour standards. The ILO International Training Centre in Turin also distributes

¹ The Office produces an annual report for the tripartite Governing Body Advisory Committee. The reporting period covers the period 1 March - 28 February, to allow for a comparison over the years as well as to compile cumulative totals. This report covers the period 1 March 2021 - 28 February 2022.

² GB.298/PV, para. 248.

³ Posted questions may be modified to preserve confidentiality.

promotional materials during relevant trainings. A promotional leaflet on the ILO Helpdesk exists in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Japanese, Myanmar, Thai, Vietnamese, Urdu, Nepalese and Chinese and is widely distributed among constituents, enterprises and partners. Other ILO departments and programmes also promote the service, notably [NORMES](#).

The ILO conducted a number of virtual trainings during the period 2021-2022, which gave great visibility to the ILO Helpdesk website. The Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) on How enterprises contribute to the achievement of decent work (SDG 8) organized with the International Training Centre of the ILO (October-November 2021) was attended by more than 1,200 participants from 114 countries. The MOOC consisted of six Live masterclasses and seven self-learning modules largely based on tools, resources and the Q&A section of the ILO Helpdesk for Business website and encouraged participants to consult the Helpdesk website for further information.

Various ILO development cooperation projects that directly engage with enterprises on decent work priorities also promote the Helpdesk as a practical tool to assist companies. The EU-ILO-OECD [Responsible Supply Chains in Asia](#) project, covering six countries in Asia (China, Japan, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam) for example produced a publication “Labour Issues in CSR: Examples from the ILO Helpdesk for Businesses Q&A” and translated Helpdesk web pages into Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Myanmar language. The [EU-ILO-OECD-OHCHR Responsible Business Conduct in Latin America and the Caribbean](#), covering nine countries in the region (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru) actively promotes the Helpdesk for Business, both in relation to governments encouraging responsible business through National Action Plans (NAPs) and as a supporting tool for enterprises conducting due diligence. The Helpdesk was also promoted in Africa including through a virtual training on “Multinational enterprises, development and decent work: the approach of the MNE Declaration” co-financed by France and the ILO organized for Members States of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and by the “Accelerating action for the elimination of child labour in supply chains in Africa (ACCEL AFRICA)” project financed by the Netherlands implemented in Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda.

Constituents also are actively promoting the Helpdesk. A number of ILO member States have appointed national focal points for the promotion of the MNE Declaration who actively promote the Helpdesk for business among enterprises operating in their country. Several governments (Belgium, France, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland) have included the ILO Helpdesk for Business in their national action plans on business and human rights or feature the service on related web sites as a supporting service for businesses when undertaking human rights due diligence. A number of employers’ organizations also promote the service among their member companies. The new ILO-IOE “MNE Declaration - A self-assessment tool for enterprises” also promotes the Helpdesk for Business.

The ILO Helpdesk for Business is also promoted by other international organizations as a support tool for enterprises on labour standards, such as National Contact Points for the promotion of the OECD MNE Guidelines (see eg. Italian NCP) and the UN Global Compact.

I. Expert Advice Service of the ILO Helpdesk for Business

A. Number of queries and users

Constituents also are actively promoting the Helpdesk. A number of ILO member States have appointed [national focal points for the promotion of the MNE Declaration](#) who actively promote the Helpdesk for business among enterprises operating in their country. Several governments (Belgium, France, Germany, Sweden and [Switzerland](#)) have included the ILO Helpdesk for Business in their [national action plans on business and human rights](#) or feature the service on related web sites as a supporting service for businesses when undertaking human rights due diligence. A number of employers' organizations also promote the service among their member companies. The [new](#) ILO-IOE "MNE Declaration - A self-assessment tool for enterprises" also promotes the Helpdesk for Business.

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Table 1: Breakdown of Users by Type

	March 2021 – February 2022	Cumulative total
Workers or Trade Unions	9	156
Employers' organizations	0	2
Governments	13	100
Initiatives	9	39
Inter-governmental	7	29
MNEs	110	998
SMEs	2	25
Suppliers	4	21
Researchers/journalists	3	101
NGOs	4	27
Unknown	2	66
TOTAL	157	1558

B. Regional origin of the users and scope of the queries

Table 2 provides a breakdown of users by region. (NB: not all queries contained sufficient information to identify the region of the user.)

There was a drop in usage from almost all regions. The most significant drops came from Middle East (-60%), Latin America (-45%) and East Asia (-37%). The exceptions were Eastern Europe (no questions last period; 3 questions this period); and North America (0 last period; 1 this period).

Table 2: Users by region

	March 2021 – February 2012	Cumulative total
Africa	6	85
Pacific	2	18
Caribbean	0	20
Central Asia	4	72
East Asia	12	144
Eastern Europe	3	33
Latin America	6	125
Middle East	4	71
North America	1	52
Western Europe	18	577
International	96	414

Table 3 provides a breakdown of regions identified in the queries, if any. During this period, questions pertaining to global operations dominated, increasing 34% over the previous period. Most regions dropped in usage (Africa down 53%; Central Asia down 69%, East Asia down 42%, Eastern Europe down 40%, Latin America down 50%, the Middle East down 67% and Western Europe down 42%) and North America dropping from 5 questions to zero. This was likely due to continued challenges with onsite inspections due to COVID-19.

Table 3: Regional focus of queries

	March 2021 – February 2022	Cumulative total
Africa	7	136
Caribbean	0	27
Central Asia	4	138
East Asia	8	191
Eastern Europe	3	61
Latin America	6	137
Middle East	6	130
North America	0	18
Western Europe	7	93
Global/unspecified	116	816

C. Sectors covered in the queries

Table 4 indicates which sectors were specified in queries. Half of the questions do not identify a specific sector, a greater proportion than usual. The number of agriculture questions stayed the same; all others dropped, some to zero. However, one sector - public services -increased significantly for the second year in a row, although the majority of questions were from companies submitting a tender. The shipping questions also increased from 0 to 2, with both questions pertaining to seafarers stranded due to COVID measures.

Table 4: Sectors concerned

Sector	March 2021 – February 2022	Cumulative total
Agriculture	17	116
Artisanal	0	3
Biofuels	0	9
Chemicals	0	32
Construction	2	64
Electronics	3	77
Extractives	0	53
Finance	0	76
Food	0	38
Forestry	0	4
Garments and textiles	8	44
Health services	8	35
Heavy manufacturing	0	44
ITC	6	35
Light manufacturing	4	82
Pharmaceuticals	0	14
Printing/Publishing	0	4
Public services	21	77
Retail	0	30
Services	7	80
Shipping	2	44
Utilities	2	6
Not specified	79	583

D. Issues raised in the queries

Table 5 provides a breakdown of the issues raised in the queries during this reporting period. OSH-related questions continued to be the most frequent. Among the fundamentals, child and forced labour were somewhat more frequent topics, but questions also included freedom of association, collective bargaining, and non-discrimination. Most noteworthy, three questions concerned how an MNE could support the development of small enterprises in the communities in which they operate (indicated in Table 5 as “other” under Employment).

Table 5: Break down of questions by area of MNE Declaration

AREA OF MNE DECLARATION	CATEGORY	MARCH 2021 – FEBRUARY 2022		CUMULATIVE TOTAL
GENERAL	Compliance with national law	3		53
	Compliance with principles of ILS	2		73
	Definitions	8		45
	FPRW	5		38
	ILO approach to CSR	1		27
EMPLOYMENT	Child labour	10		124
	Forced labour	11		121
	Employment promotion	0		11
	Non-discrimination	4		78
	Termination of employment	8		82
	Employment Relationship	0		9
	Other	3		41
TRAINING	Skills and training	1		13
CONDITIONS OF WORK AND LIFE	General	0		15
	HIV/AIDS	0		2
	Hours of work	7		88
	Housing/Food	0		18
	OSH	24		173
	Paid leave	0		19
	Privacy	0		11
	Social security	5		37
	Wages	11		99
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS	Collective bargaining	4		41
	Freedom of association	6		37
	Social dialogue	0		12
OTHER	Migrant workers	9		107
	Special categories of workers	5		61
	ILS and productivity	0		3
	ILO approach to sustainable enterprises	0		5
	Interpretation procedure	0		3
	Helpdesk operations	0		18
	Requests for collaboration	6		24
	Company Union Dialogue	1		4
	Statistical information	79		73
	Miscellaneous	14		86
	MNE Declaration as an instrument	0		20

II. ILO Helpdesk for Business Website

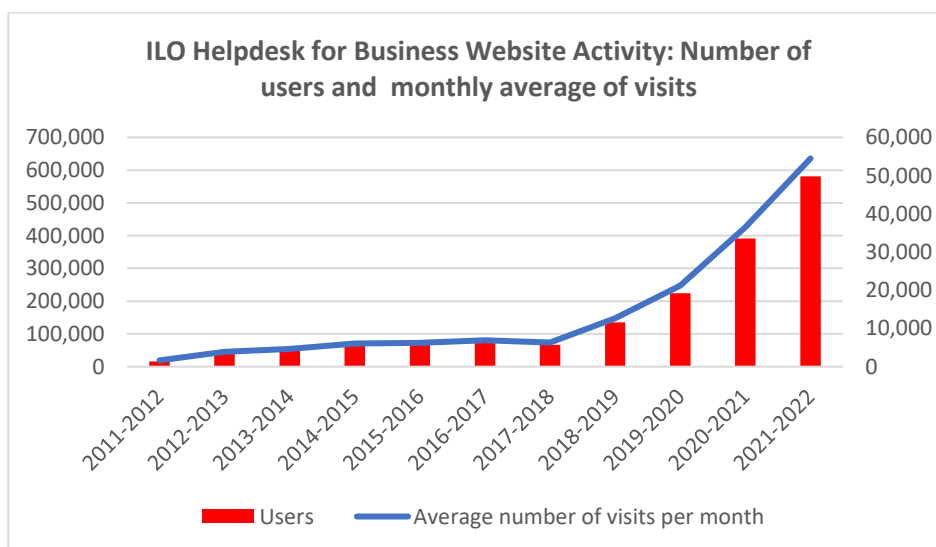
The website has been regularly updated with new ILO publications, news concerning activities of the existing ILO Business Networks, webinar recordings and information on the ILO training offer relevant to enterprises.

The ILO conducted several virtual trainings during the period 2021-2022, which gave a lot of visibility to the ILO Helpdesk website. This included a Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) on *How enterprise contribute to the achievement of decent work (SDG 8)*, organized with the International Training Center of the ILO (October-November 2021) and attended by more than 1,200 participants from 114 countries. The MOOC was comprised of 6 live masterclasses and 7 self-learning modules based on tools, resources and Q&A from the ILO Helpdesk for Business website. It encouraged participants to consultant the Helpdesk website for further information.

A. General data on website visitors⁴

Table 6 provides a summary of activity until the end of February 2022. **The table demonstrates an increase in the number of users for a fourth consecutive year.** More than 1.5 million users have now consulted the ILO Helpdesk for Business web site since its launch in 2010.

The average number of visits per month is 54,481 for the reporting period (March 2021 to February 2022), an increase of 49% compared to the same period last year. The web site is now fast approaching 3 million page views.



⁴ The data is gathered through Google Analytics, and for the first time for this reporting period for all web sites of the Helpdesk in English, French, Spanish and the mirror sites in Chinese and Japanese.

Table 6: Helpdesk Website Activity: yearly comparisons⁵ and total

	2011 - 2012	2012- 2013	2013- 2014	2014 - 2015	2015 - 2016	2016- 2017	2017- 2018	2018 - 2019	2019- 2020	2020- 2021	2021- 2022	Overall Total
Visits (average/ month)	19,717 (1,643)	46,144 (3,845)	55,491 (4,624)	72,421 (6,035)	74,705 (6,225)	82,349 (6,862)	75,742 (6,311)	152,218 (12,684)	255,124 (21,260)	437,424 (36,452)	653,772 (54,481)	1,925,107
Users	16,355	40,656	48,937	66,609	67,954	75,376	67,178	135,706	224,332	391,113	581,394	1,715,610
% of new users	60%	72.5%	76%	79.65%	78,27%	80,88%	82.5%	82.2%	81.9%	81,3%	82.7%	-
Countries or territories visitors are located in	144	194	205	209	213	210	210	212	212	225	228	-
Pages viewed	48,031	68,364	75,821	94,791	96,984	102,819	97,905	222,013	367,447	597,730	860,268	2,728,964

B. Geographical Distribution of users

The users were located in all five regions. The Americas remains the region where the majority of users are coming from. It is interesting to note an increase in the percentage of users coming from Asia that may be attributable to promotional efforts made in the context of the implementation of the EU-ILO-OECD Responsible Supply Chains in Asia project, covering six countries in Asia (China, Japan, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam). This project produced a publication on “Labour Issues in CSR: Examples from the ILO Helpdesk for Businesses Q&A” and supported the translation of pages of the web site into Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Myanmar language.

	2011- 2012	2012- 2013	2013- 2014	2014- 2015	2015- 2016	2016- 2017	2017- 2018	2018- 2019	2019- 2020	2020- 2021	2021- 2022
Africa	1,471 (7.42%)	2,512 (5.43%)	3,259 (5.86%)	3,456 (4.77%)	2,656 (4.49%)	3,416 (5.13%)	3,590 (5.29%)	6,825 (5.03%)	12,392 (5.49%)	24,462 (6.31%)	34,300 (5.89%)
Americas	7,128 (35.93%)	23,962 (51.79%)	33,068 (59.50%)	46,929 (64.80%)	40,748 (68.83%)	44,830 (67.31%)	44,706 (65.83%)	99,240 (73.07%)	173,530 (76.90%)	270,397 (69.74%)	365,161 (62.73%)
Asia	3,088 (15.57%)	5,320 (11.50%)	4,867 (8.76%)	6,284 (8.68%)	5,786 (9.77%)	5,611 (8.42 %)	6,756 (9.95%)	9,923 (7.31%)	12,138 (5.38%)	54,651 (14.10%)	135,977 (23.36%)
Europe	7,358 (37.09%)	12,263 (26.50%)	11,851 (21.32%)	14,325 (19.78%)	8,959 (15.13%)	11,576 (17.38%)	11,708 (17.24%)	18,433 (13.57%)	25,742 (11.41%)	35,182 (9.07%)	43,822 (7.53%)
Oceania	448 (2.26%)	875 (1.89%)	1,298 (2.34%)	1,123 (1.55%)	800 (1.35%)	710 (1.07%)	921 (1.36%)	1,240 (0.91%)	1,452 (0.64%)	2,036 (0.53%)	2,442 (0.42%)
Unknown	344 (1.73%)	1,339 (2.89%)	1,233 (2.22%)	304 (0.42%)	250 (0.42%)	458 (0.69%)	235 (0.35%)	155 (0.11%)	410 (0.18%)	976 (0.25%)	428 (0.02%)

⁵ Years are: March 2011 – February 2012, March 2012 – February 2013, March 2013 – February 2014, March 2014 – February 2015, March 2015-February 2016, March 2016- February 2017, March 2017-February 201, March 2018-February 2019, March 2019-February 2020, March 2020 to February 2021, and March 2021 and February 2022. The Website was launched in October 2010 so data for 2010 are excluded.

The top 25 countries overall were:

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Colombia | 14. Dominican Republic |
| 2. Mexico | 15. Malaysia |
| 3. India | 16. Chili |
| 4. Peru | 17. El Salvador |
| 5. Ecuador | 18. South Africa |
| 6. Philippines | 19. Honduras |
| 7. Spain | 20. Panama |
| 8. Argentina | 21. Morroco |
| 9. Japan | 22. Paraguay |
| 10. France | 23. Canada |
| 11. Bolivia | 24. Venezuela |
| 12. Guatemala | 25. Kenya |
| 13. United States | |

C. Most Visited Webpages

The most visited web page remains the same with the Q&A on freedom of association in Spanish in the top position. Followed by Q&A and topic pages in Spanish and English on various subjects. Users demonstrated strong interest in issues such as freedom of association and collective bargaining, wages, occupational safety and health, and non-discrimination and equality.

The top 10 consulted Helpdesk Webpages were:

Web page	Page views
1. Q&A on business and freedom of association (in Spanish)	111,844
2. Q&A on collective bargaining (in English)	79,888
3. Q&As on wages (in Spanish)	71,691
4. Q&As on business and occupational health and safety (in Spanish)	74,518
5. Q&As on business, non-discrimination and equality (in Spanish)	65,517
6. Q&As on business, non-discrimination and equality (in English)	44,877
7. Q&A on collective bargaining (in Spanish)	17,902
8. Business and freedom of association (in Spanish)	16,824
9. Business and COVID-19 (in Spanish)	16,838
10. Business, non-discrimination and equality (in English)	12,853

D. Site Traffic Sources

During the reporting period (March 2021 to February 2022), 91.6% of the users have accessed the Helpdesk web site through organic searches via search engines, 7.5% accessed it directly (typing the URL directly in their browser or clicking on a link from their bookmarks or PDF documents). Only 0.8% were referred to the Helpdesk website from another web site and the remaining accessed it via social media or a reference in an email.

The following were the top referral web site sites:

- Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) of Japan: 232
- Academic, administrative, Commercial CRM and virtual education information system for educational institutions/Sistema de información académico, administrativo, Comercial CRM y de educación virtual para instituciones de educación (<https://site4.q10.com/>): 225