

CELLULE RESPECT – 2022 Report

INTRODUCTION

The Cellule Respect (Cellule) held 21 meetings in 2022. During these meetings, the Cellule discussed and handled formal and informal complaints, as well as enquiries about support measures at EPFL.

The Cellule, in collaboration with the Harassment Task Force from A to Z, contributed to the definition of the new “Respect” framework. This has involved close cooperation with the new prevention and de-escalation mechanism of the Trust and Support Network.

In 2022 the Cellule continued working on increasing its visibility and transparency, in particular by publishing an anonymized version of its 2021 annual report. It also established a stronger collaboration with other services of the student and personnel communities, to facilitate the resolution of the cases submitted to the Cellule.

During 2022, the composition of the Cellule was modified, with a new coordinator taking office in May and a new president in September.

Cellule Respect members in 2022

Claudia Noth, (since April 2020)
 Eric Du Pasquier (since May 2018)
 Françoise Chardonnens (since 2019, President until September 2022)
 Ines Ariceta (since May 2018 and until May 2022), Ofelia Tursi (since May 2022), Coordinator
 Kathryn Hess (since January 2021, President since September 2022)
 Luisa Lambertini (since January 2021)

COMPLAINTS (CASES) AND DISCUSSIONS

General observations

COMPLAINTS (CASES)

The Cellule opened 19 cases in 2022 (compared to 20 in 2021 and 2020, 10 in 2019 and 6 in 2018 during six months of activity) of which 15 were handled and closed in 2022.

In addition, the Cellule closed the 7 cases that remained open from 2021. There are 2 cases open from 2020 (in which there was follow-up of external investigations) and 5 open from 2021 (processed by the cellule in collaboration with other EPFL departments)

During 2022, there were four cases that did not fit into the previous categories identified by the Cellule, *i.e.*, cases involving violent behavior (physical and verbal violence).

- 16 of the 19 cases were received directly in the respect inbox.
- The remaining cases were either sent directly to a Cellule member or the Cellule was in copy in an email sent to other members of the Support Network (e.g., to the Person of Trust, or to an HR manager).

- The Cellule dealt with 16 cases through internal management. One case was delegated to human resources, and in the remaining two cases (related to the same work environment) an external administrative enquiry was opened, which is still ongoing.
- After the Cellule has referred a case to an internal instance, the Cellule closes the case once the internal instance has treated the complaint and has informed the Cellule thereof.
- There are increasing numbers of reports from staff, including PhD students and post-doctoral fellows, while the number from the student body has decreased.
- There is a continuing downward trend in reports of the use of social media as a tool of harassment. Social media are predominantly used in cases of alleged sexual harassment.

DISCUSSIONS

The Cellule opened (and closed) 29 discussions in 2022 compared to 13 in 2021 and 7 in 2020. "Discussion" is a typology created in 2019 to reflect and track additional situations submitted to the Cellule that are not formal complaints.

More specifically discussions pertain to:

- Requests for help and/or need for clarification on EPFL instances and support services as a function of topic and audience;
 - Requests for information on prevention and management actions to be shared with one's team by those in charge;
 - Requests for information on how to behave in situations related to issues of respect, so as to act in accordance with EPFL values.
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- Most of the discussions in 2022 related to requests for information on support measures in place at EPFL for the resolution of problems related to organizational and relational conflicts. Additional discussions pertained to requests for support measures related to moral well-being, study, and work.
 - A small number of discussions concerned requests for support from people external to EPFL; the requesters were referred to appropriate external bodies.
 - The request for generic information came twice from witnesses to harassment.
 - An increasing percentage of discussions stem from team/teaching leaders who request support in implementing harassment prevention measures for the groups they lead/teach, including students, PhD students, postdoctoral fellows or other staff members potentially at risk.
 - One of the discussions led the Cellule to decide to write, with the support of Human Resources and Academic Affairs, an Ethics Charter, together with an excerpt from the Compliance Guide, to be read and signed by teaching assistants.

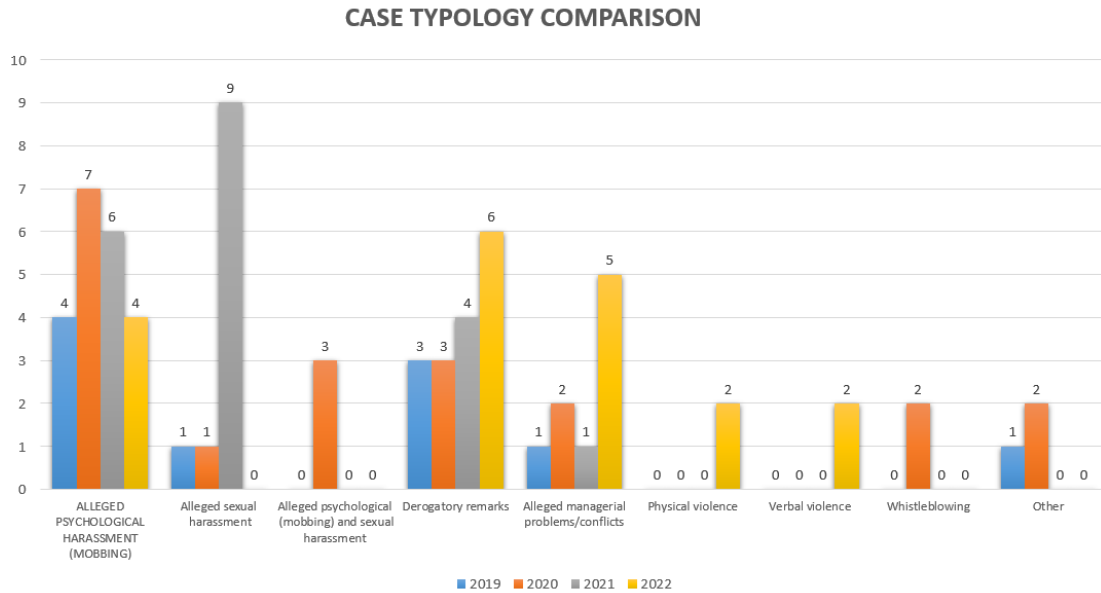
This report reflects the status of cases as of December 31st, 2022.

Case typology alleged and totals for 2022

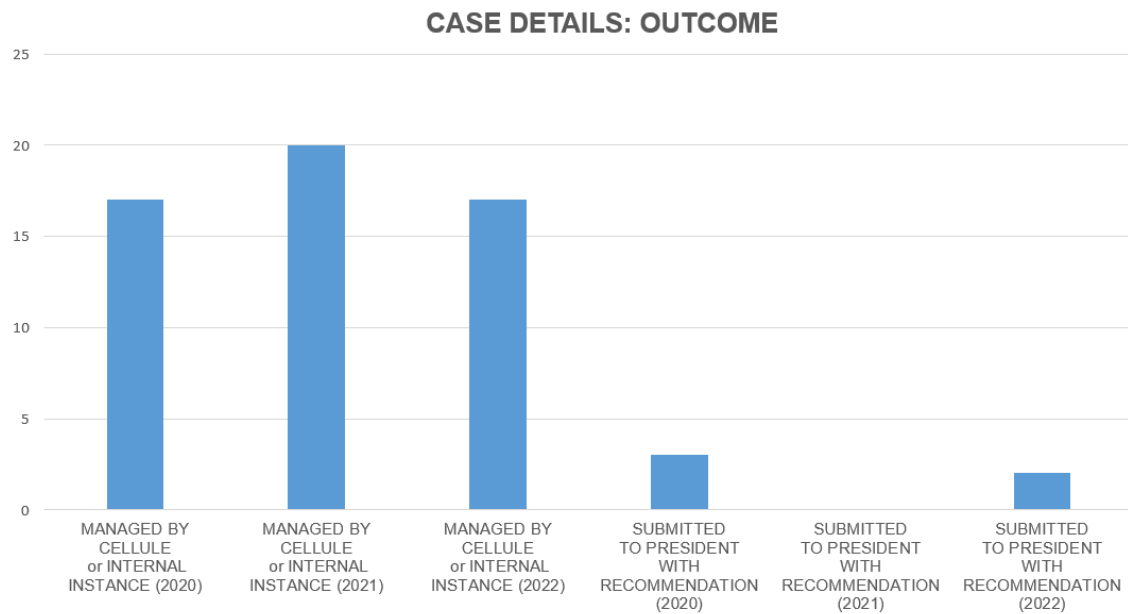
- 6 cases of derogatory remarks
- 5 cases of alleged managerial problems/conflicts
- 4 cases of alleged psychological harassment (mobbing)
- 2 cases of physical violence
- 2 cases of verbal violence
- 0 cases of alleged sexual harassment

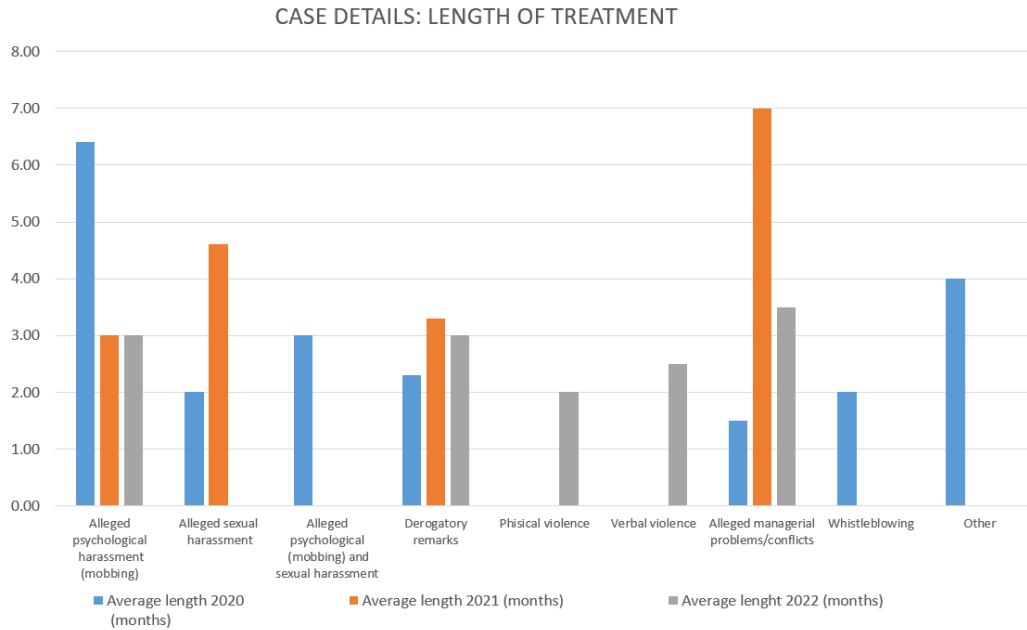
- 0 cases of alleged psychological (mobbing) and sexual harassment

Case typology comparison for 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022



Overview of case details in 2022 and comparison with 2021 and 2020





GOVERNANCE

- The Cellule welcomed a new coordinator in 2022. Its membership was otherwise unchanged.
- The Cellule continued to meet twice a month, adapting the meeting schedule to handle the constraints of the members when necessary.
- The Cellule invested a significant amount of time in discussing the future “Respect” framework. The new Respect Compliance Officer (RCO) will assume office in May 2023 (one month before the entry into force of the two Directives 1.8.3 and 1.8.1, which delineate the organization of the new Respect Compliance Office)
- The current composition of the Cellule (which will become the Respect Compliance Office) will be maintained until December 2023.
- The Cellule’s reflections were shared directly with the Vice-Presidency for Responsible Transformation (VPT) and were important for the implementation phase of the measures emerging from the Task-Force on Harassment from A to Z
- The Cellule’s contributions were also important for the implementation and operation phase of the new psychosocial risk prevention mechanism (whereby the risk definition is broader, including harassment, discrimination, mobbing, etc.), called the Trust and Support Network.
- The Cellule actively participated in the work of the A to Z Harassment Task Force, until the closure of the Task Force's work on 7.10.22.
- The Cellule increasingly emphasized the importance of prevention and of lowering the level of conflict by intervening even in cases that were not submitted as formal complaints.
- The Cellule has increased its collaboration with natural institutional partners (*i.e.*, with Legal Affairs, Human Resources, and the Trust and Support Network) with the aim to promote shared management of cases before they attain the status of formal complaints.

COMMUNICATION

- In 2022, the cooperation with the VPT continued with regard to proposals and suggestions for the 'Respect' website, to improve its content in terms of accessibility and visibility.
- The 'ownership' of this website had already been transferred to the VPT during 2021, and the Respect campaign also made the Respect Cellule's own case reporting procedure more visible.
- In the course of 2022, the concept of transparency was made concrete with the publication for the first time of an anonymized version of the Annual Report of the Cellule on its webpage.
- The concomitant publication of an article in the Open Campus newsletter about the Cellule and its functioning acted as an amplifier for the publication of the report, illustrating the increasing investment of EPFL management in making a serious impact on improving the quality of life at EPFL.

LESSONS LEARNED IN 2022

- **Cellule Overview**
 - A great deal of work was done during the design and implementation phases of the A to Z Harassment Task Force.
 - The new support and complaint “Respect” structure proposed by the Task Force has been validated by the Direction, which required the deployment of two new Directives (LEX 1.8.3., LEX 1.8.1) to regulate the operations of the Respect Compliance Office. The A to Z Harassment Task Force also defined the roles of the Trust and Support Network.
 - Thus, the Trust and Support Network has taken on the role of prevention of psychosocial risks, while the Respect and Compliance Office will take on the role of managing formal complaints.
 - It is clearly essential for these two bodies to maintain an open communication channel and to cooperate in solving problems that need to be dealt at both the prevention and the formal levels.
 - Based on the Cellule’s experiences from 2022, the “discussions” respond to a specific and important need. As stated above, these are usually requests for information/ action intertwining prevention and formal action are intertwined. Moreover, discussions have represented an increasing fraction of the work of the Cellule (with 29 discussions in 2022 compared to 13 in 2021 and 7 in 2020).

- **Case management**
 - There is growing awareness in the EPFL community that Respect is a central value of our school.
 - No coaching case was proposed as an intervention measure in 2022. A follow up for a previously addressed case was put in place with a written coach's report and a debriefing of the process with the coachee for future improvements.
 - On June 21st 2022, it was decided by the Direction that when the Cellule recommends coaching as an intervention the costs for staff and professors should be covered by the faculty or the institute to which the coachee belongs.
 - There has been an increase in the number of cases of derogatory remarks (6 in 2022 compared to 4 in 2021) and management conflicts (5 in 2022 compared to 1 in 2021),

which are often described as mobbing by complainants (4 in 2022 compared to 6 in 2021).

- The difference between mobbing and management conflict seems not to be clear to most complainants. A preliminary investigation is often required to triage cases that should be dealt by the Cellule (mobbing) or to other competent bodies at EPFL (i.e., human resources and/or the person of trust for management conflicts).
 - It is interesting to note that there were significantly fewer sexual harassment cases than in 2021 (0 in 2022 compared to 9 in 2021).
 - Following on reports from student delegates, the Cellule, in consultation with the VPA legal team and Human Resources, implemented an ethics charter, accompanied by an excerpt from the compliance guide, to be signed by recruited student assistants. This procedure started during 2022 and has been operational since early 2023.
 - The discussions were also the source of another important initiative, concerning the request to carry out an investigation into the study and working climate in one of the EPFL faculties. The Cellule promoted this project, which will be realized in the course of 2023.
- **Governance**
 - The presidency of the Cellule changed in September 2022, continuing its mission with equal dedication and efficiency.
 - **Communication**
 - The Cellule needs to better communicate to the outside world its internal functioning, the different stages of complaint analysis, and the measures that are recommended.
 - There is a growing demand to communicate the outcome of the procedures being handled by the Cellule (when dealing with cases of low complexity or severity that do not require external investigation). This demand exists both on the part of complainants and on the part of the community, which would like to have insight into the nature of the complaints and the work of the Cellule. It is essential however to protect the sensitive data of those directly involved.
 - The lack of outside information undermines the community's trust in the cell.
 - At the end of 2022, a reflection began on improving communication to the outside world by setting up an automatic response to an email at respect@epfl.ch. This gives users confidence in the actual receipt of the report and the processing time of cases. The automatic response was implemented at the beginning of 2023.

IMPORTANT FOLLOW-UPS FROM CELLULE'S 2021 REPORT

- Ensuring good communication of its work is an important task for the future Respect Compliance Office.
- The Cellule wrote an article in the Open Campus newsletter and published an anonymized version of its annual report for the first time, with the aim of increasing its visibility and improving transparency and thus trust.
- The Cellule continues to improve collaboration with the professional and institutional support services of the Trust and Support Network.
- The Cellule continues to collaborate on case management with Legal Affairs services and will possibly develop a workflow tool that can also be shared with Human Resources.

NEXT STEPS/FOLLOW-UP WORK

- Develop a strategy for communicating to EPFL student associations, in order to increase their awareness of their responsibilities related to issues of respect.

- Continue to increase awareness and trust in the Cellule's work and the future respect structure:
 - The Cellule will publish an anonymized version of its annual report online.
 - The Cellule will publish another article in the Open Campus newsletter, detailing the composition of the Cellule and summarizing the report.
- As the RCO becomes operational, develop a workflow and tools to implement Directive 1.8.3.
- Develop a closer collaboration with the VPT and the TSN governance to facilitate the de-escalation of cases through prevention and consensual resolution.

CELLULE PROPOSALS AND REQUESTS TO THE DIRECTION

- Validate the Cellule's 2022 annual report.