

EPFL Annual Report-Activity as a Person of Trust 1st January 2025-31st December 2025

I. Summary

A. Annual report

The purpose of this annual activity report (the “Report”) is to provide an account of the activities of a Person of Trust/Mediator with EPFL employees and students (together, the “EPFL Community”) from 1st January to 31st December 2025 (the “Year”). The data is analysed on the basis of the cases processed during the Year, including the new cases for the Year as well as any cases that were opened in previous years and still ongoing (the “Cases”).

B. Methodology

As in my previous reports, the cases are categorised based on information gathered from the persons who consulted me (the “Enquirers”) and my analysis of that information.

I do not conduct any in-depth legal analysis of the cases, as this is not part of my duties as a Person of Trust/Mediator.

In addition, the creation of a relationship of trust with the EPFL Community is based on strict rules of confidentiality and respect for people’s anonymity. Therefore, any information that could enable the Enquirers to be identified has been excluded from the Report. The use of the masculine gender in the Report serves the same purpose.

As in the previous year, I decided to analyse the data on the basis of the cases dealt with during the Year, including the new cases for the Year as well as those opened in previous years that were still ongoing (the “Cases”). The aim is to have a comprehensive view of the situation.

Finally, the Cases were categorised according to the classification of the *International Ombudsman Association (IOA)*.

C. Trends & Recommendations

Overall, this Year confirmed the positive effects of setting up the *Trust and Support Network* (TSN) and the various measures taken to improve the working and studying atmosphere at EPFL.

1. Stabilisation of the number of new cases in 2025

This table shows the history of the number of Cases handled by year, since 2021 (128 in 2021, 103 in 2022, 154 in 2023, 160 in 2024 and 141 this Year).

# new cases 2021-2025	#cases handled 2021-2025*																				Grand Total	
	2021				2022				2023				2024				2025					
	Resolved and closed	Left EPFL	No further action	2021 Total	Resolved and closed	Left EPFL	No further action	2022 Total	Resolved and closed	Left EPFL	No further action	2023 Total	Resolved and closed	Left EPFL	No further action	2024 Total	Resolved and closed	Left EPFL	No further action	Ongoing		2025 Total
2021	87	1	22	110	9		1	10	1			1									110	
2022					80	2	11	93	10			10									93	
2023									113	12	18	143	17	3	1	21					0	143
2024													110	7	22	139	9				9	139
2025																	77	5	14	36	132	132
Grand Total	103	2	23	128	89	2	12	103	124	12	18	154	127	10	23	160	86	5	14	36	141	892

* 2017-2020 excluded, total cases handled by year take account of 2017-2020

In 2025, 132 new cases were opened, a level comparable to the previous year. 141 Cases were processed, including 9 Cases initiated in 2024.

892 cases have been opened since the beginning of my mandate.

86 Cases were resolved this Year, while in 5 Cases the person left EPFL and 14 did not follow up after six months and are no longer active. 36 Cases were still ongoing at the end of the Year.

The stabilisation, at a high level, of the number of new cases since 2023 can be interpreted as a positive effect of the actions taken by EPFL to increase awareness within the EPFL Community of preventing psychosocial risks and to facilitate access to the various resources available.

It should be noted that 126 of the new cases opened this Year received individual support. In addition, 5 required recourse to a mediation process, the outcome of which was positive (e.g. a win-win solution found) for the parties concerned. Finally, one situation involved a group of Enquirers.

The Cases handled this Year revealed the following trends, which should be taken into account in order to further improve the working and studying environment for the members of the EPFL Community.

2. Managers, Deans and Professors: the cornerstone of preventing psychosocial risks

During the Year, the majority of the situations reported were still related to interpersonal Conflicts, mainly in the context of subordinate relationships, but also between peers and colleagues.

These situations, which are often complex and emotionally charged, can have a significant impact on the working environment, the well-being of the people concerned and the functioning of the staff as a whole.

The need to provide support in these Cases, as well as in particularly sensitive situations involving inappropriate behaviour, has once again highlighted the central role played by managers, Deans and Professors.

When these members of staff take the warning signs seriously, adopt an appropriate attitude and intervene at an early stage, relying on existing mechanisms and involving the

relevant actors (e.g., the person of trust, Human Resources, the doctoral school or the student affairs), the harmful effects of these situations can be significantly limited or even avoided.

Conversely, failing to react, trivialising the facts or providing inadequate care will tend to exacerbate tensions, prolong the suffering of the persons concerned and increase psychosocial risks within the institution.

This Year, it seems that many Deans have become aware of their managerial responsibilities towards Professors, which has had a positive effect on the resolution of problematic situations.

Several Deans have also shown their willingness to gain a better understanding of issues relating to psychosocial risks and to make Professors aware of these issues.

This confirms that managers, Deans and Professors are a real cornerstone in preventing psychosocial risks and promoting a respectful and safe working environment.

Recommendations

Training for managers, Deans and Professors should be continued and strengthened by making them aware of their responsibilities in terms of preventing psychosocial risks, detecting risk situations early and managing conflicts and inappropriate behaviour correctly.

In this regard, organising workshops in the form of breakfasts or lunch debates, for example, in the presence of the Person of Trust or another TSN member, would make them aware of these sensitive issues in a pragmatic and context-appropriate manner.

3. Strong increase in stress and burn-out

Work-related stress and burn-out situations are on the rise this Year.

19 occupational stress situations and 6 incidents of burn-out were handled.

These situations concern all professional categories, which underlines the transversal nature of this problem within the institution.

Professors in particular are reporting high levels of stress or burn-out incidents, linked to the multiple roles and responsibilities they juggle. In addition to their educational duties, they are often faced with managerial obligations for which they often do not feel sufficiently equipped. The difficulties encountered in managing relationships, both with members of their teams and between each other, constitute an additional source of tension.

In addition, a recurring concern expressed by managers and Professors is the fear of being accused of inappropriate behaviour. This apprehension can lead, in some cases, to an approach of avoidance and non-intervention in the face of problematic situations, particularly with regard to performance, communication or the functioning of a team. This absence of regulation contributes to an accumulation in tensions and an increase in stress, both for Professors and managers and for the teams concerned.

The support offered as part of the Person of Trust service mainly consisted in providing them with a secure listening space, working on identifying and managing the state of

stress, and clarifying the issues involved in the situations encountered and the potential leeway for change, whether individual, managerial or organisational.

Recommendations

Strengthening support for Professors and managers by providing them with effective and adapted HR tools, such as SMART objectives, structured annual evaluations and regular feedback mechanisms (including 360° feedback), would definitely be an asset in terms of reducing the stress caused by their managerial functions.

Developing pragmatic managerial training that focuses on communication, clarifying expectations and regulating difficult situations is also recommended. Smooth communication and clearly defined expectations make it possible to keep harmful stress to a minimum and promote the emergence of “useful” stress, which is a vector of efficiency and sustainable performance.

4. Confirmed decrease in Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance Cases

The number of new cases in these categories has confirmed its downward trend, with 6 new cases recorded during the year (for a total of 7 Cases handled).

Generally speaking, this reduction is a positive sign and may reflect the fact that psychosocial risks are being prevented more effectively or that internal practices, particularly management practices, have improved.

However, this development needs to be analysed with caution. Indeed, as already mentioned in 2024, the decrease in the number of cases in this category might also not reflect an actual decrease in risk situations, but may result from:

- fear of reprisals;
- a lack of trust in internal mechanisms for reporting and handling complaints; or
- a lack of knowledge of the programmes available.

It should be noted that this Year, the majority of situations in this category came from Doctoral Students and Students, broken down as follows:

- 4 Allegations of sexual harassment, which appear to be mainly a private matter for the persons involved;
- 2 Allegations of bullying that appeared to be serious, since they highlighted the need for appropriate managerial intervention;
- 1 Allegation of discrimination that appeared to be serious, and which was reported to the Professor concerned and to the RCO.

This distribution highlights once again the particular vulnerability of Doctoral Students, whose unique position can exacerbate the risks of isolation, hierarchical dependence and difficulties in asserting their rights.

Recommendations

It is essential to maintain a high level of vigilance, especially with regard to Doctoral Students, who are known to be more exposed to psychosocial risks and situations of non-compliance.

It is therefore recommended that:

- communication on internal resources and reporting mechanisms, their confidentiality and safeguards for data subjects be further consolidated;
- awareness of the issues of harassment and discrimination in particular be raised among Doctoral Students and Professors;
- a proactive managerial culture be encouraged, promoting the prevention, early detection and appropriate treatment of risk situations;
- trends be monitored regularly (e.g. turnover and long-term sickness absences) in order to identify potential weak signals masked by a decline in the number of reports.

This will involve strengthening trust in internal processes, protecting those most at risk and ensuring an environment that complies with the institution's regulatory and ethical requirements.

5. Students: need for an increased awareness of sexual harassment and the concept of consent.

This Year, 3 Cases of Allegations of sexual harassment reported by Students were handled. These situations appeared to relate mainly to interpersonal difficulties and communication problems.

Nevertheless, these situations remain sensitive and highlight a lack of clarity among Students regarding the concepts of sexual harassment, consent and boundaries in relationships.

Thus, these situations involved interactions that occurred in a private setting, particularly during student evenings, and related to relational issues of a primarily personal nature, although they had repercussions on life at EPFL. These included friendly or informal relationships that have deteriorated.

The Enquirers concerned realised that they lacked the tools to deal with these situations constructively, a situation that could lead to harmful approaches such as attempts at "vigilante justice", the creation of cliques, the spreading of rumours and damage to the reputation of some people, who sometimes did not have the opportunity to have their own say.

These mechanisms pose a real risk to all parties involved, both individually and collectively.

The support offered mainly consisted of listening sympathetically, combined with providing information on the various options available to assert their rights, where such options existed. None of the Students wished to initiate formal proceedings or file a complaint, since the facts were not clearly made out and fell within their private lives.

Recommendations

Increasing awareness and prevention among Students is essential, in particular by:

- organising targeted and regular awareness-raising activities on the concepts of sexual harassment, consent, defamation, boundaries in relationships and clear communication;
- clarifying EPFL's scope of intervention in order to better distinguish between situations pertaining to people's private lives and those that can be handled by the institution;

- providing practical tools (e.g. teaching resources, conferences, workshops or speaking groups) to enable Students to better manage ambiguous or conflictual relationship situations;
- promoting a culture of dialogue and respect, aimed at preventing any escalation of conflict, stigmatisation and damage to reputation.

D. Risk analysis

This Report provides an analysis of the potential legal and reputational risks incurred by EPFL, classified as “high”, “moderate” or “low”, based on the categories and subcategories of IOA Cases.

This analysis shows that the high and moderate potential risks mainly concern Allegations of bullying or sexual harassment (subcategorised into Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance Cases), as well as situations of interpersonal Conflicts with line managers that could affect the health or peace of mind of the employee and/or the manager or Professor concerned.

If left unaddressed, these situations may trigger EPFL’s liability.

During the Year, only one moderate-risk Case was handled, in contrast to previous years, when the number of high- or moderate-risk Cases was quite high (7 Cases in 2024).

This development can be interpreted as an encouraging sign, reflecting the positive effects of the psychosocial risk prevention policy that has been implemented at EPFL for several years now. In this regard, establishing the TSN has helped to strengthen coordination among the various internal resources, leading to sensitive situations being handled in a more effective and harmonised manner.

However, it is important to remain vigilant. As noted above, some situations may not have been identified, in particular due to a lack of confidence in the existing internal complaints mechanism. The implementation of the new internal complaints process should reassure the EPFL Community in this regard.

Recommendations

Increased efforts in communication, in particular with regard to the issue of protection from retaliation, are recommended to ensure that the decrease in the number of high- and moderate-risk Cases is not caused by a lack of confidence in the institution and/or the internal mechanisms for managing psychosocial risks, or by fear of retaliation.

E. Satisfaction survey

As every year, an anonymous satisfaction survey was sent to the Enquirers. 64 of them responded during the past Year.

Overall, the results of this survey were very positive: 59 respondents said they were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the service, while 5 said they were “dissatisfied”. Regarding the quality of the service, 60 respondents rated it as being of “very high quality” or “high quality”, as against 4 negative ratings.

The reasons for the dissatisfaction expressed were not specified. However, it appears that misunderstandings or dissatisfaction arise when the initial expectations of the Enquirers are not fully met. This can occur in particular when the problem cannot be resolved as desired (e.g. where a dismissal or sanction is imposed or a performance assessment is unsatisfactory).

On the other hand, although this is clearly stated in the rules communicated to Enquirers as soon as they make contact, some may expect to receive comprehensive legal advice, which is not the role of the Person of Trust.

The Person of Trust service plays an essential role in identifying and dealing with conflicts or problems upstream, before they become sensitive or risky, both for the institution and for the EPFL Community.

Here are some of the comments made by some Enquirers this Year in response to the question of “*What did you like or not like in the service provided?*”:

“

- *The availability, which made it possible to book an appointment quickly (with little need to wait); the knowledge of Ms. de Francesco, which meant that she could provide a lot of answers immediately during the interview.*
- *Availability, compassion and knowledge of how EPFL is organised.*
- *The fact that the testimony was heard in a non-judgmental manner.*
- *Safe, trusted environment.*
- *First of all, I was listened to; then, I was given advice; finally, I was shown compassion.*
- *I really appreciated the quality of the service. The support was always very helpful, attentive, and thoughtful. Our discussions were exceptionally kind and helped me clarify several complex situations. I have nothing negative to mention - I consistently felt heard and supported.*
- *To give an idea of the quality of the listening offered: my work-related issue had triggered a psychosomatic disorder within me that had been going on for six months. The day after our appointment, it disappeared.*
- *The framework and methods of intervention were very clear; the issue to be resolved was expressed in a clear and unambiguous manner, using a holistic and reassuring approach; various solutions and approaches were put forward, discussing my ability to put them into practice, offering to put me in touch with other contact persons at EPFL on other topics identified that did not fall within the ambit/professional responsibility of the person of trust; an exercise (that was fairly surprising but simple and effective) was suggested over the medium- to long-term to facilitate dialogue and instil trust via a meticulous process associated with generous listening.*
- *Staff were responsive and supportive throughout the process. This support continued after the end of the mediation, something I appreciate very much.*
- *Direct and useful advice, Person of trust is both full of understanding but also clear about the potential solutions, or lack of them.*
- *The mediator was attentive, friendly, a good listener and able to de-escalate where required. Very much appreciated.*
- *The discussions and the support were excellent. This is a very important resource.*
- *I felt that my problem was not taken seriously, or at least not seriously enough.*
- *Very useful. Provided good paths for reflection and specific legal elements to help me deal with the situation. Thank you to EPFL for offering this service and thank you to the person involved for her availability.*
- *Very good listener, and she suggested some good solutions and techniques to help me move forward.*
- *No service was provided as the problem was not considered to be professional. However, the contact was good. I just regret that instead of referring me to someone, she just said: “This is not a professional problem; I can't help you.”*

- *I appreciated the range of advice, ranging from situation-specific legal knowledge to personal stress management tips. I appreciated this person's understanding, gentleness and non-judgemental attitude. I felt listened to and the advice helped me a lot to get out of a difficult situation. Thank you again.*
- *Ms. de Francesco shows unfailing professionalism, is attentive and a good listener. She provides wise advice, which she explains, and shows the right balance between empathy and neutrality. She is fair and gives us all the right pointers.*
- *She personally helped me a lot in very difficult situations in which I felt isolated.*
- *The discussions we had, as well as these tips, let me move forward positively.*
- *Her external point of view as a person of trust, and the clarity of what she said.*
- *Based on a subsequent contact with HR, I get the impression that certain details were passed on when I only agreed to make an anonymous report.*
- *The fact that this person is well aware of how an organisation, and EPFL in particular, works.*
- *valuable listening time, a good suggestion for action.*
- *availability and the advice offered.*
- *True listening, rapid analysis of the situation presented and an immediate understanding of the issues presented. Strong and supportive feedback, very relevant advice. Thank you very much.*
- *Very clear principles for assessing current behaviour and considering future behaviour, followed by very concrete practical advice.*
- *I enjoyed the openness and availability to discuss proposed various scenarios of potential actions I could have had undertaken, including discussions on potential legal outcomes that I was not aware before.*
- *Being able to have an open and frank discussion with her.*
- *The listening, follow-up and advice received were much appreciated and made me feel reassured. However, the underlying issue is still unresolved, despite the fact that several months have elapsed and all parties concerned have been involved.*

- *The intelligence, perspicacity, knowledge of EPFL-specific conditions, courage to give advice (rather than generic information), and attention to my individual circumstances.*
- *The ability to listen and offer simple solutions.*
- *Her external and objective viewpoint, and her assistance in finding the right phrases/words.*
- *Quick to respond, even at the weekend, and immediately suggested a meeting.*
- *Listening, applied and knowledgeable of the EPFL structure and limitations.*
- *She listens to you very well, and even within a short chat, she's able to detect the main issues and guide on how to deal with them.*
- *I enjoyed being able to talk to someone I trust and getting good advice.*
- *Attentive listening and good practical advice that proved very useful*
- *See above.*
- *The appointment took place in a secure environment. No judgment on Aurélie's part, and sound advice. I hope that her high-level interventions will be useful.*
- *Appreciated: quick contact, practical advice received, rapidly gained my trust*
- *Very professional.*
- *Empathy, neutrality, targeted and constructive advice*
- *"I appreciated the high quality of her active listening as well as her positive questioning.*
- *THANK YOU."*
- *I liked that it was very quick and she was always available. Suggestions were very practical. I did not like so much the follow-up with HR, or the lack of coherence between suggestions from the two support services.*
- *Her ability to listen and understand was particularly appreciated. Gives advice that takes a sensitive approach to the situation."*

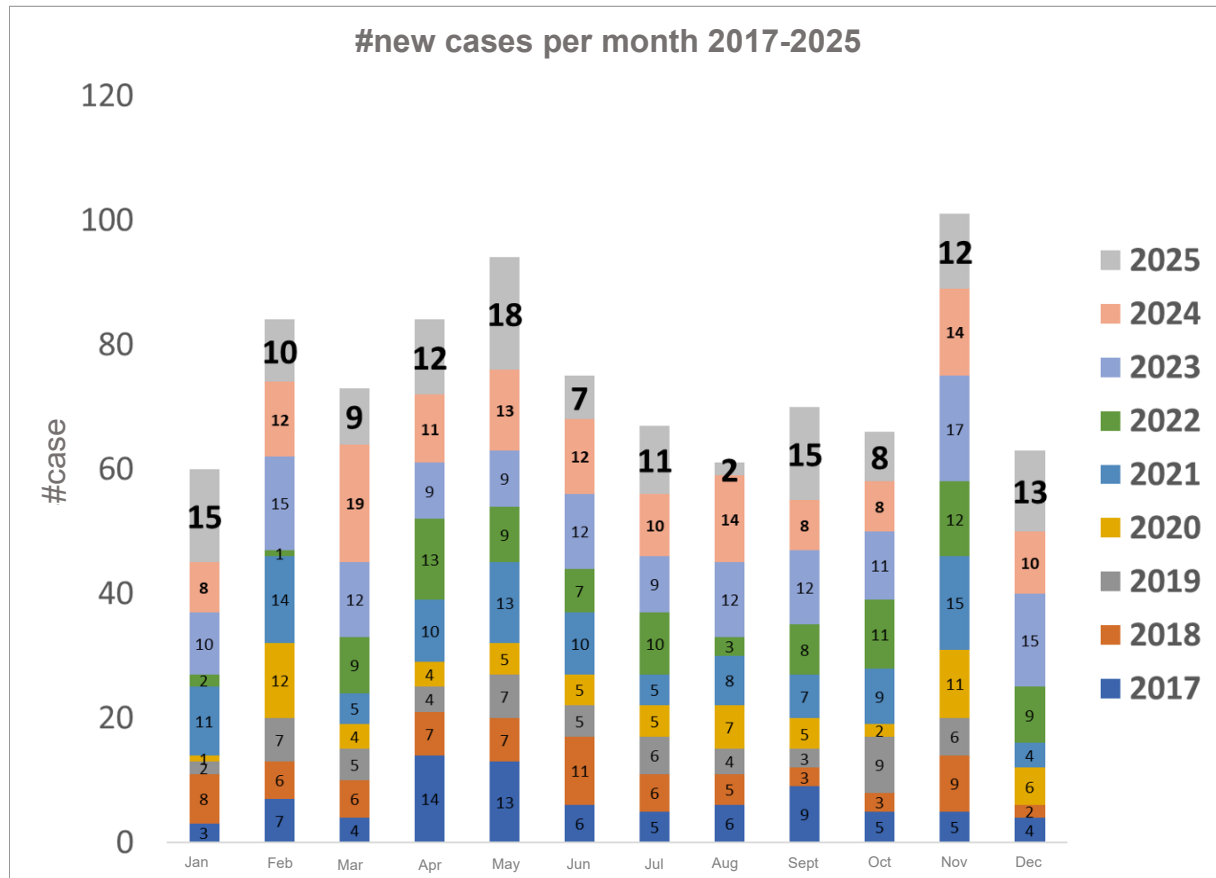
In response to the question "Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the Person of Trust service?":

- *nothing more to add.*
- *They should have pens :)*
- *I don't have specific suggestions for improvement. My experience with the Person of Trust service has been consistently excellent — supportive, responsive, and genuinely helpful. From my perspective, the service already fulfils its purpose very effectively.*
- *It should be more well-known and accessible!*
- *No, nothing to change.*
- *Be clearer about EPFL's practices. The legal advice given was accurate but EPFL's internal machinery works so slowly (2 months) that there was no point in following the advice.*
- *Everything is perfect just as it is. Good luck and best regards.*
- *Make us sure you help us confidential and please help students in complicated rules which may change their lives!*
- *multiply it .. we need it!*
- *No, it is very useful and the person is very competent. On the other hand, as no intervention is possible, this limits the impact a little.*
- *No.*
- *No it is already beyond expectations.*
- *No.*
- *No.*
- *No.*
- *I would have hoped for the person to be more present during the meeting, rather than appearing to be barely paying attention. It would also be preferable if she were not in direct contact with the other party.*
- *Advertise it more, I was not aware this service was there to help me, and I was only made aware by the therapist who helped me at first hand.*
- *Every party involved in a conflict should be obliged to see the mediator, because when only one of the protagonists sees her, the conflict will never be resolved.*
- *And managers should also see the mediator.*
- *Despite a critical situation acknowledged by the various parties involved, the corrective actions put in place were not satisfactory to guarantee my safety, which had a negative impact on the smooth running of the work and the ambiance in the group.*
- *Supervisors should have more room for manoeuvre and ensure that cases are followed up more rigorously.*
- *The service is insufficiently promoted. It is only thanks to a colleague's advice (in another EPFL unit) that I became aware of this service. We receive daily newsletters about less significant or relevant things, yet hardly a word is published about this service.*
- *Advertise this resource more and encourage people to use it.*
- *not for now.*
- *Continue.*
- *It was a great service- it just took me several years to get to know about it. It would be fantastic if it was even better advertised and maybe even extended, so as to allow for an even faster intervention. I had heard of the Peer2Peer counseling before but not the Person of Trust.*
- *increase visibility and confidence in this type of service by involving heads of service and unit, COSECs and potentially other positions that are points of contact for colleagues.*
- *Stronger connection and alignment with the HR . »*

II. Detailed analysis

A. General presentation

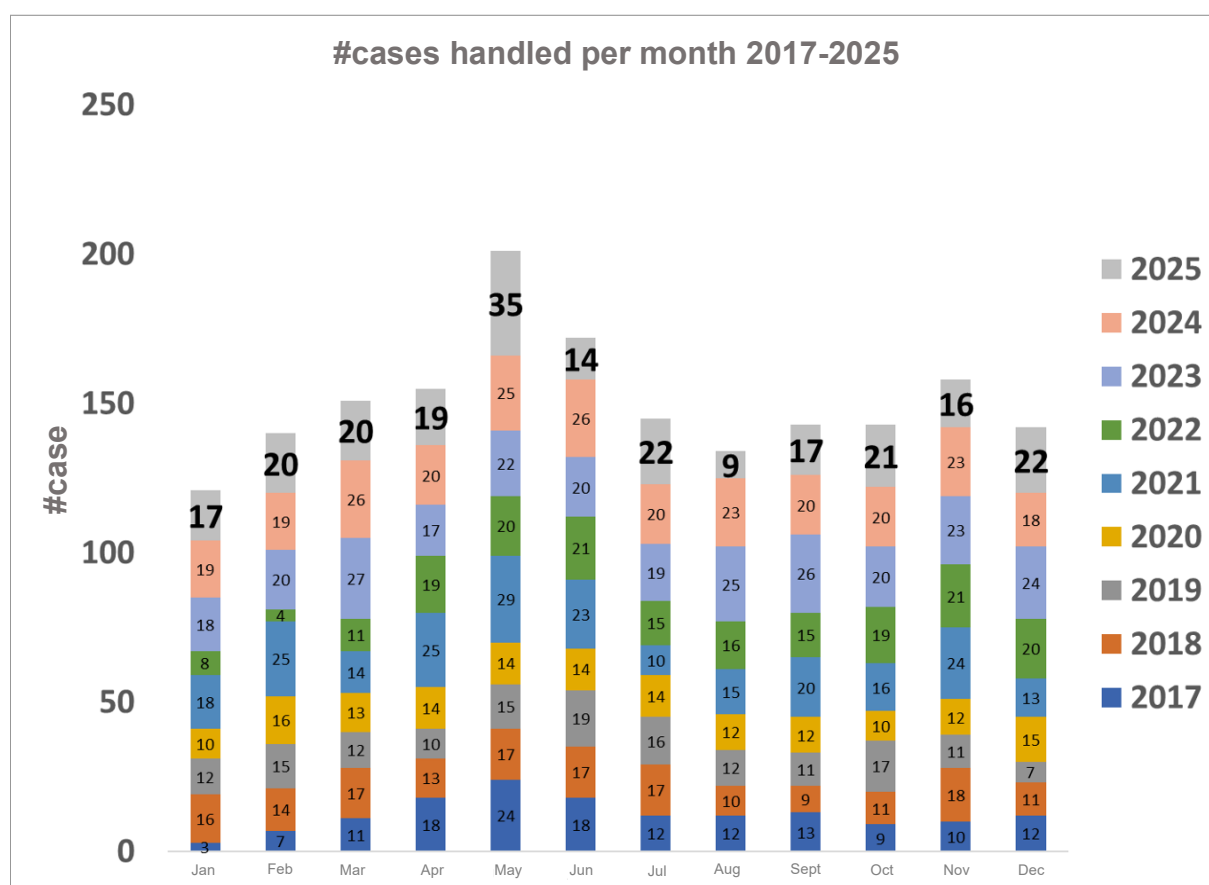
1. New cases



Comments

The monthly analysis of new cases over the 2017–2025 period shows a certain seasonality, with recurring peaks in spring and autumn, particularly between April–May and September–November. Over the last few years, the monthly volume has tended to stabilise at a higher level, reflecting a sustained trend in the use of the Person of Trust service.

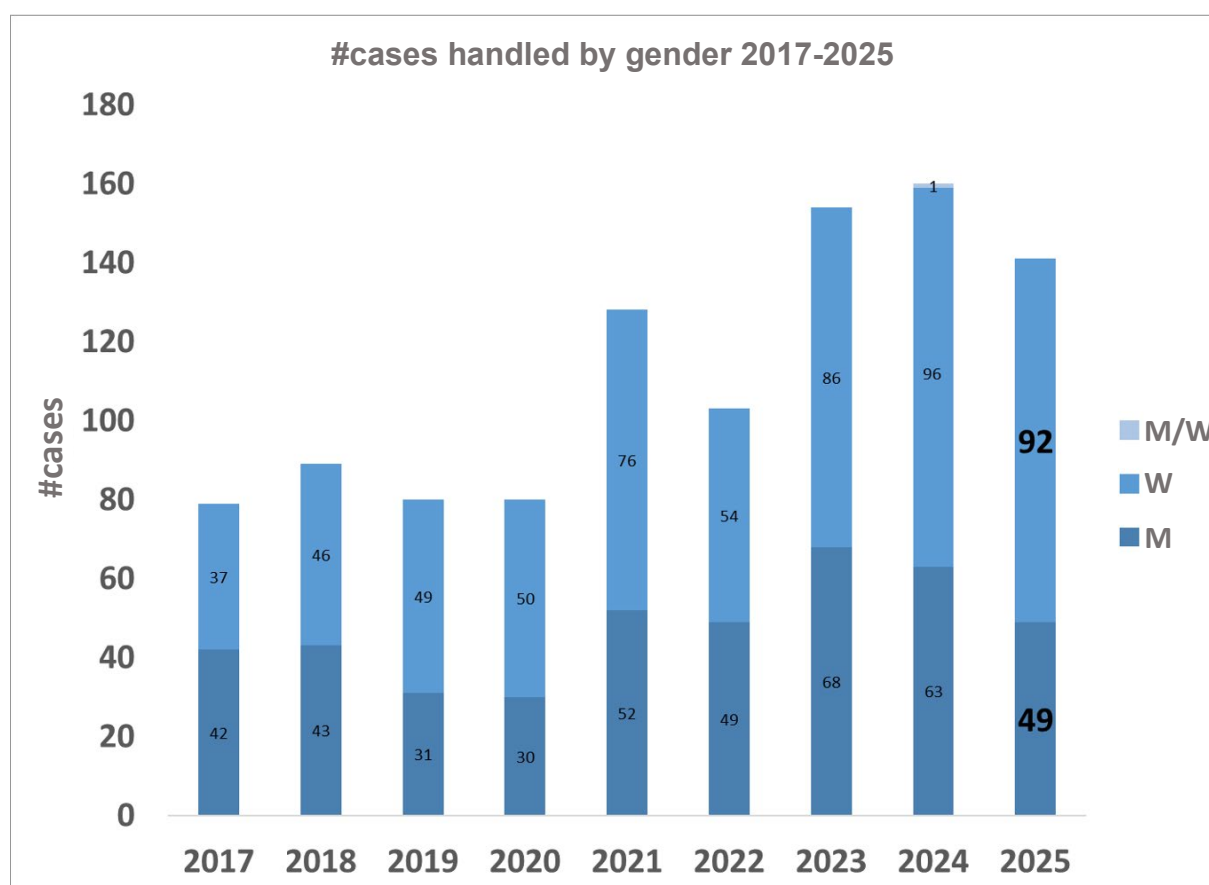
2. Cases handled



Comments

In 2025, the number of Cases handled monthly was broadly stable compared to previous years, with a sharp peak in May (35 Cases).

3. Division between Men/Women



Comments

Once again this Year, women used EPFL's Person of Trust service more often than men. A significant difference was observed. 92 women used the service this Year, as against 49 men.

4. Location

A large majority of the Cases handled this Year came from the Lausanne site. Nevertheless, some support was provided at the sites of Sion, Neuchâtel and Geneva.

As noted in previous reports, it would be advisable to ensure that all sites are aware of the existence of the Person of Trust service and, more broadly, of the TSN.

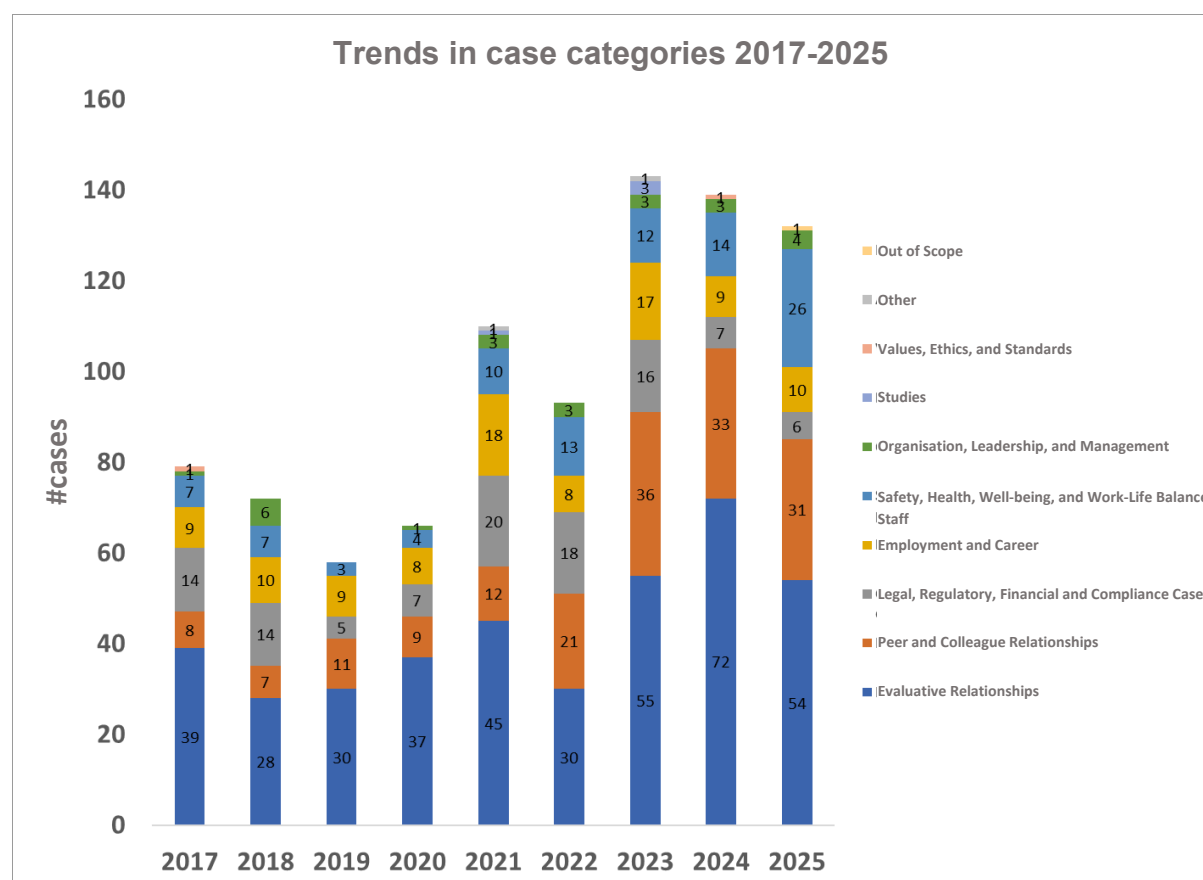
Recommendations

If this has not already been organised, an information session for other EPFL sites on the existence of this service (and especially of the existence of the TSN) would be a definite advantage to ensure that all sites and, potentially, all problematic cases are covered. Having the Person of Trust present during these sessions would facilitate any subsequent contact, if necessary.

B. Case categories

1. Trends between 2017 and 2025

The following table shows the trends in case categories, as defined by the IOA, between 2017 and 2025.



Comments

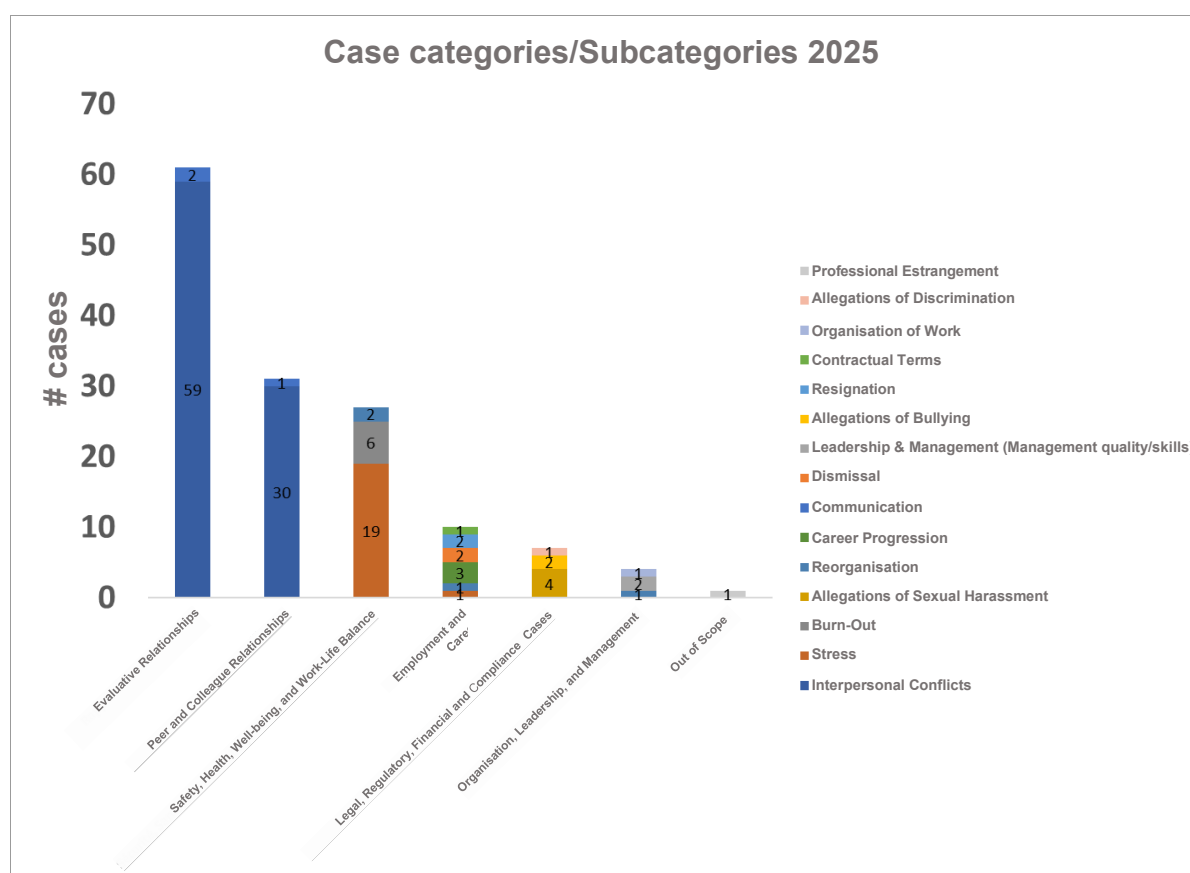
Once again this Year, there is a clear predominance and an increase in the number of Cases initiated in 2025 falling under the category of Evaluative Relationships.

The next major trend is in Peer and Colleague Relationships.

Security, Health, Well-being, and Work-Life Balance Cases, which have increased in number compared to 2024.

Legal, Regulatory and Financial Cases are stable compared to last Year, confirming a decrease in the Cases falling under this category since 2024.

2. Case categories and subcategories in 2025



Comments

This Year, the following categories and subcategories of cases once again predominated among the Cases handled:

- **Evaluative Relationships** (subcategory: *Interpersonal conflicts*);
- **Peer and Colleague Relationships** (subcategory: *Interpersonal Conflicts*); and
- **Safety, Health, Well-being, and Work-Life Balance** (subcategory: *Stress*).

As in previous years, interpersonal Conflicts in evaluative relationships continue to dominate Cases this Year. They mainly concern tensions between managers/Professors and subordinates and are usually part of recurring issues related to human resources management (e.g. the clarification of roles and responsibilities, setting annual objectives, communication of expectations, evaluation interviews, feedback, workload, managerial style or the availability of the manager/Professor).

In addition, in several situations, there are more pronounced relational difficulties, fuelled by a poor working environment and communication perceived as inadequate or inappropriate.

In the category *Peer and Colleague Relationships*, the number of Cases remains significant and is part of a generally stable trend. The situations dealt with are mainly interpersonal Conflicts, often linked to communication problems, mutual misunderstandings or persistent tension in relationships. Several Cases highlight insufficiently defined rules of collaboration, unclear responsibilities and, in some contexts, a lack of managerial intervention to defuse or regulate existing tensions.

With regard to the category of *Safety, Health, Well-Being, and Work-Life Balance*, the issues raised this Year are mainly related to situations of excessive stress and, to a lesser extent, burn-out. These situations are often associated with a heavy workload, managerial functions that are often perceived as incompatible with an academic role, deadlines that are perceived as critical (exams, defences, contract terminations or reorganisations) and organisational uncertainties that have a direct impact on the well-being of employees.

The volume of *Legal, Regulatory and Compliance Cases* remains relatively small this year. The situations reported mainly concern Allegations of sexual harassment. There were also 2 Cases of Alleged bullying and 1 Case of Alleged discrimination, all of which appeared to be serious. As mentioned last Year, although this trend may at first glance be perceived as positive, it nevertheless calls for caution.

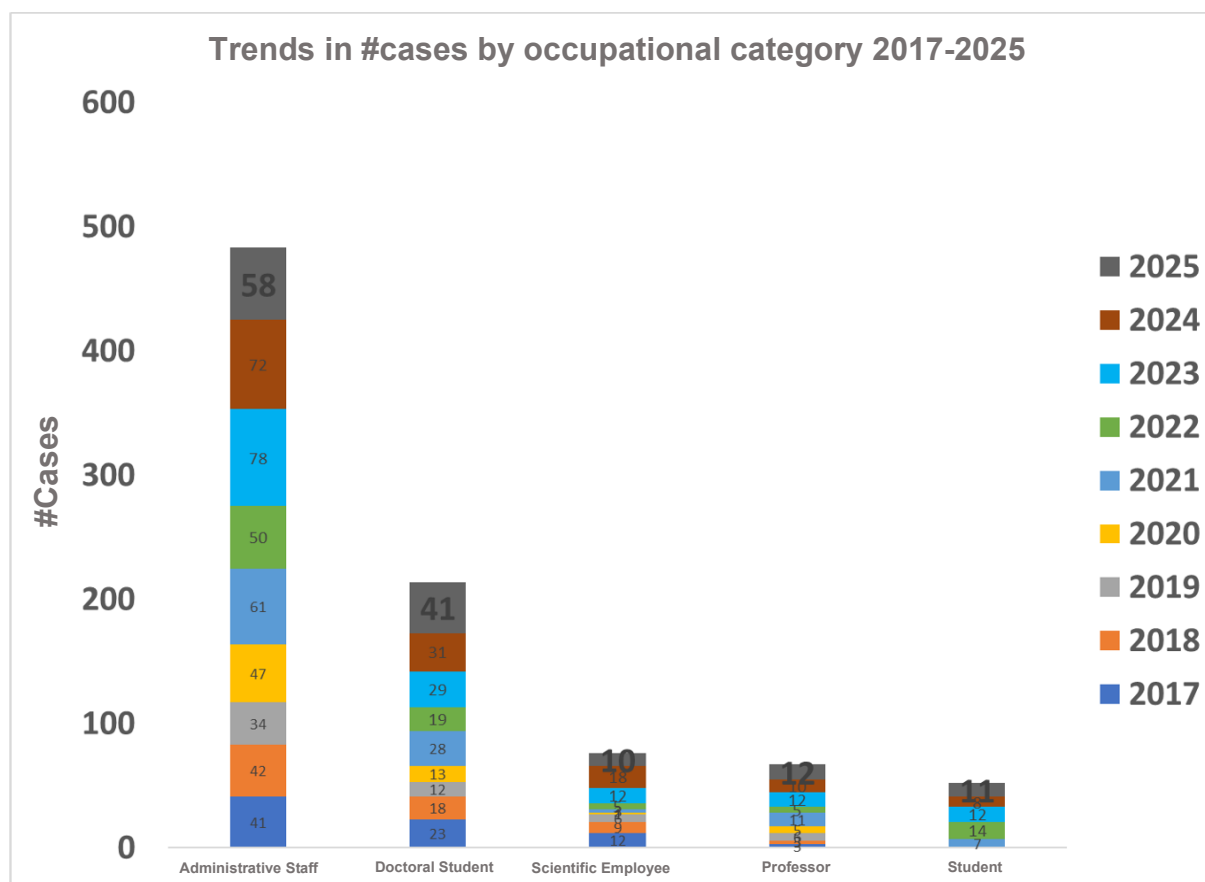
- 4 Allegations of sexual harassment
 - 3 Students and 1 Doctoral Student complained about situations that took place during student evenings. The facts reported were unclear and did not appear at first glance to be corroborated. Nevertheless, the persons affected were obviously recommended to lodge a complaint with the RCO, which they refused to do. The support thus consisted in giving them tools to manage the emotional and relational impact of these situations.
- 2 Allegations of bullying
 - These situations appear to be serious and demonstrate the need for a relationship of trust that allows prompt and appropriate intervention by the hierarchy.
 - A member of the Administrative Staff complained about the inappropriate attitude of two Doctoral Students, during a joint business trip in particular. In particular, the Enquirer reported incidents of isolation, open mockery and humiliation in public. Once the hierarchy was notified, the necessary steps were taken to stop and remedy the situation;
 - A Doctoral Student described inappropriate behaviour from three of his colleagues. This involved sidelining, mocking and repeated verbal aggressions in public. The hierarchy was informed and failed to act. It simply advised the Enquirer to “*ignore them*”, thus placing him in a situation of extreme insecurity. It should be noted that the latter did not wish to report this situation to the RCO for fear of reprisals.
- 1 Allegation of discrimination
 - A Doctoral Student complained of regular racist and homophobic remarks by his lab manager towards people of the same nationality as him (Chinese). This situation was allegedly raised with the Professor and brought to the

attention of the RCO. I was not informed of the outcome of these proceedings.

C. Breakdown by occupational group

1. General trends

The table below shows the trend in the number of new cases per year, by occupational category, since the beginning of my term.



Comments

Administrative Staff once again generated the highest number of new cases this Year, with 58 open cases.

Doctoral Students (i.e. Doctoral Students, Doctoral Assistants and Post-Doctoral Students - collectively “Doctoral Students”) accounted for 41 new cases this Year, a sharp increase as against 2024.

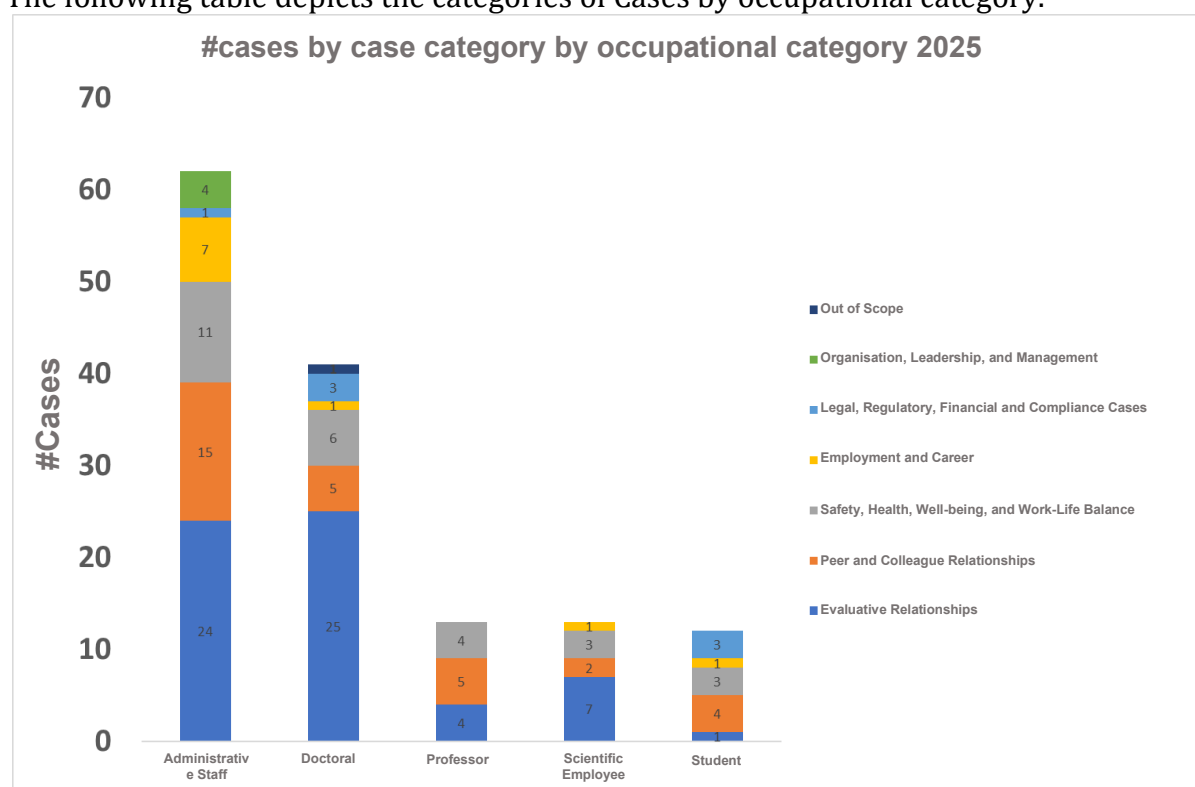
10 Cases came from Scientific Employees.

12 Cases came from Professors, who came to see me for a wide variety of situations.

11 Cases concerned Students, many of which were more related to private issues.

2. Case categories per occupational category in 2025

The following table depicts the categories of Cases by occupational category.



Comments

Once again this Year, it has emerged that Cases relating to Evaluative Relationships predominated in all occupational categories, with the exception of Professors and Students. These situations mainly concerned conflicts related to insufficiently well-defined roles and responsibilities, as well as relational and communication difficulties that were not adequately addressed by the manager or Professor.

Cases relating to Peer and Colleague Relationships were encountered mainly between Administrative Staff but also in other categories. Again, these were mainly relational and communication issues that often stemmed from ill-defined roles, responsibilities and objectives.

Finally, the majority of Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance Cases concerned Students and Doctoral Students.

Doctoral Students are a particularly high-risk population who are liable not to report certain situations, particularly out of a fear of reprisals.

There is also a need to raise Students' awareness of inappropriate behaviour and, in particular, of the concept of sexual harassment and consent.

III. Conclusion

1. Status & Results

The table below sets out the current status of Cases handled between 2021 and 2025

# new Cases 2021-2025*	2021				2022				2023				2024				2025					Grand Total
	Resolved and closed	Left EPFL	No further action	2021 Total	Resolved and closed	Left EPFL	No further action	2022 Total	Resolved and closed	Left EPFL	No further action	2023 Total	Resolved and closed	Left EPFL	No further action	2024 Total	Resolved and closed	Left EPFL	No further action	Ongoing	2025 Total	
2021	87	1	22	110	9		1	10	1			1									110	
2022					80	2	11	93	10			10									93	
2023									113	12	18	143	17	3	1	21					0	143
2024													110	7	22	139	9				9	139
2025																	77	5	14	36	132	132
Grand Total	103	2	23	128	89	2	12	103	124	12	18	154	127	10	23	160	86	5	14	36	141	892

* 2017-2020 excluded, total cases handled by year take account of 2017-2020

Comments

86 Cases handled in 2025 were resolved (9 of which were opened in 2024). 36 were still ongoing as of 31st December 2025.

In the context of this analysis, “Resolved” indicates that the issues raised by the Enquirers have been resolved, through individual support or mediation. These Cases were confirmed as having been resolved by the Enquirers.

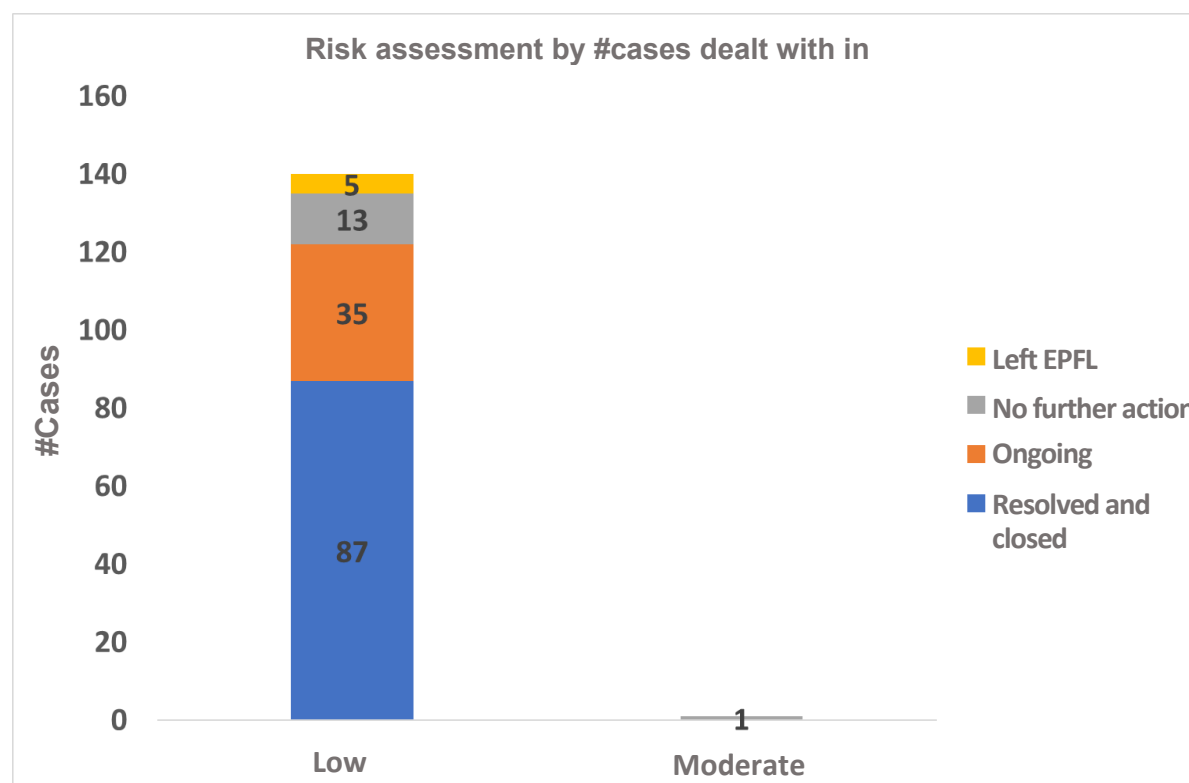
5 Cases processed in 2025 were closed due to the fact that the Enquirers had left EPFL (whether voluntarily or not).

Finally, 14 Cases have not been followed up for at least six months. It is therefore conceivable that the support provided may have allowed them to resolve their problem in one or more sessions, that they may have preferred to choose another route of resolution, or that they may have felt that the support provided did not meet their objectives (e.g. to challenge a dismissal, a warning, a performance appraisal or any other decision taken by the management).

2. Risk analysis

The table below provides a statement of the potential legal and reputational risks for EPFL based on the Cases handled in 2025.

Being aware of these risks will allow EPFL to continue implementing an appropriate programme to prevent and manage them appropriately.



Comments

Risk classification

The risks are defined here according to the following classification:

- the “high” column (no Cases handled in this category this Year) refers to Cases involving potentially serious allegations that constitute a significant reputational and/or legal risk to EPFL (e.g. several persons have made the same allegations, the facts described could constitute acts of bullying or sexual harassment or discrimination under Swiss law, the facts appear serious and documented or the facts are known to the organisation);
- the “moderate” column refers to Cases relating to potentially serious allegations that constitute a moderate reputational and/or legal risk for EPFL (e.g. one or more persons are concerned, the facts invoked relate to management, behavioural or relational problems that could be detrimental to the health of employees, they are known to the institution or they may be incidents of burn-out or interpersonal conflicts); and
- the “low” column designates Cases that pose a low reputational and/or legal risk to EPFL.

This Year, 1 Case assessed as being of moderate risk was handled, a significant decrease from previous years.

This Case was the abovementioned Allegations of bullying by a Doctoral Student against his colleagues. This Case was classified as representing a moderate risk for the institution, in so far as the criteria for mobbing appear to have been met and the hierarchy, despite being aware of the situation, did not take appropriate action.

It should also be noted that the Doctoral Student concerned did not follow up after his appointment with the Person of Trust, which seems to confirm his reluctance, or even fear, to take steps to put an end to this inappropriate behaviour.

In general, the decrease in the number of moderate- and high-risk Cases is an encouraging sign. However, this trend needs to be confirmed in the coming year.