

2025 Annual Activity Report and Case Statistics of the Respect Compliance Office

Submitted to: EPFL Direction

Source: Respect Compliance Office (RCO)

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This report presents the activities of the Respect Compliance Office (RCO) during 2025, in accordance with the framework defined by Directive LEX 1.8.3 on the prevention and management of psychosocial risks at EPFL. It outlines the main institutional developments of the year, the trends observed in the cases handled, and the lessons drawn from the operation of the system. It also contributes to the institutional memory of the system and to the understanding of its development.

The year 2025 unfolded in a broader context of institutional transition and reflection concerning the psychosocial risk framework at EPFL.

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Glossary:

Alert: An alert is a contact recorded by the RCO concerning a specific situation, a single incident, or several related incidents that raise concern or may involve psychosocial risks or issues of personal integrity. An alert may or may not later lead to a formal complaint.

Assessment: The structured evaluation conducted by the RCO to understand a situation, examine the available information, clarify the relevant facts and context, and determine the appropriate next steps under the applicable framework.

Case: Any situation formally recorded by the RCO, including formal complaints, alerts, and requests.

Case closure: The formal closing of a case after assessment.

Classification: The initial categorisation of a formal complaint or alert based on the information first received by the RCO.

Complainant: The person submitting a formal complaint.

Complaint not substantiated: A formal complaint that falls within the RCO's mandate and has been assessed on the basis of the information collected, but where the facts cannot be qualified as a breach under the applicable framework.

Complaint not upheld: A formal complaint that cannot be admitted or pursued because it falls outside the RCO's mandate, does not concern a potential breach of personal integrity under LEX 1.8.3, or does not provide sufficient information to allow the RCO to assess the matter or refer it to the competent authority.

Conservatory measures: Temporary measures that may be implemented or recommended during the handling of a formal complaint where necessary to preserve the integrity of the complaint-handling process.

External investigation: An independent investigation conducted by an external investigator or body, generally in relation to a formal complaint, when the allegations require an impartial and in-depth examination of the facts beyond the RCO's internal assessment process.

Formal complaint: A structured complaint submitted by a directly affected person under LEX 1.8.3.

Impact: The scope of the situation: individual, group, or institutional.

Initial discussion: A confidential exchange with the RCO before any formal step is taken.

LEX 1.8.3: EPFL directive on the prevention and management of psychosocial risks.

Protective measures: Temporary measures that may be implemented or recommended as part of the handling of a formal complaint or an alert, where necessary to support and protect the persons concerned throughout the process.

Qualification: The final assessment of a formal complaint by the RCO, based on the facts, context, and available information. Qualification applies to formal complaints, not to requests or alerts, unless an alert later becomes a formal complaint.

Request: A request is a contact recorded by the RCO seeking information, clarification, or guidance on the applicable framework, available support options, or relevant institutional actors. It may concern a general or hypothetical situation but does not report a specific incident or situation of concern.

Respondent: The person concerned by a formal complaint.

TSN: Trust and Support Network.

Executive Summary

In 2025, the Respect Compliance Office (RCO) continued its activities under LEX 1.8.3, handling formal complaints, assessing alerts, and responding to other sensitive cases related to psychosocial risks or potential breaches of personal integrity. With 99 new cases recorded in 2025, compared with 84 in 2024, RCO's activity continued to increase.

The most notable development was the increase of alerts, from 41 in 2024 to 74 in 2025, while formal complaints decreased from 38 to 21. This development may indicate that the RCO is increasingly used not only to file formal complaints, but also as an accessible and trusted point of contact for raising concerns, seeking advice, or discussing a situation before deciding whether to initiate a formal complaint. It also points to the need for greater clarity in the framework and for sufficient system capacity to respond to the evolving nature and volume of cases brought to the RCO.

The 2025 data also point to a clear improvement in case follow-up and overall responsiveness. One notable indicator is the decrease in closures due to the complainant's lack of response or disengagement: while this represented 17.9% of formal complaints in 2024, no such closure was recorded in 2025. This reflects the introduction of a more proactive follow-up strategy for complainants who did not initially respond, as well as more regular monitoring and clearer communication throughout the process.

In addition, implemented actions also increased, from 53.6% of formal complaints in 2024 to 61.9% in 2025. Combined with the fact that 87% of recorded cases were closed within three months (as in 2024), these indicators suggest that the RCO process has become more responsive and more effective in maintaining contact with the parties involved and providing appropriate responses to significant personal, professional, or academic difficulties.

The year was also marked by major institutional developments, including the external evaluation of the system, the transfer of the RCO to the VPH, and the renewal of the Committee.

The activities of the Respect Compliance Office are based on LEX 1.8.3, which defines EPFL's framework for preventing and managing psychosocial risks, including harassment, discrimination, and breaches of personal integrity. Within this framework, the RCO operates as an independent and confidential body responsible for assessing formal complaints and advising EPFL on appropriate measures. The directive also ensures coordination between the RCO and the Trust and Support Network (TSN), enabling both early support mechanisms and the launch of formal complaint procedures when required.

Governance: RCO Committee and RCO Unit

Per LEX 1.8.3, the Respect Compliance Committee provides strategic oversight and guidance. Its operational body is the Respect Compliance Unit, which manages the handling of complaints and supports implementation.

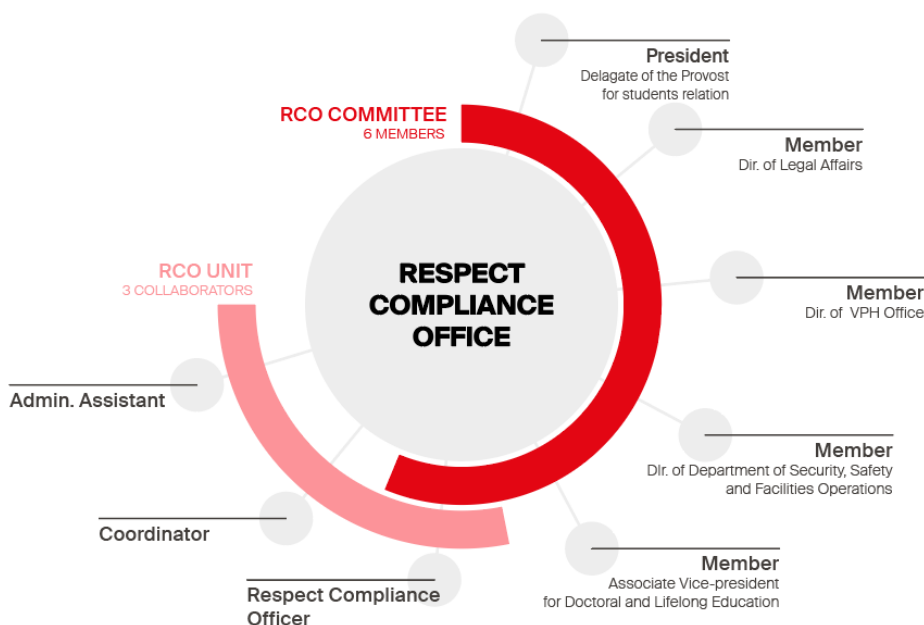
Throughout 2025, the Committee composed of representatives from various EPFL services met on a weekly basis to assess cases and issue recommendations. All cases are presented by the Respect Compliance Officer to the Committee, which holds collective responsibility for:

- The assessment of the admissibility of complaints and alerts: Determining whether a case falls within the scope of psychosocial risks as defined in Article 4 of LEX 1.8.3.
- The definition of appropriate actions: Proposing suitable measures such as mediation, involvement of the People Experience Department or line management, or other support mechanisms tailored to the case.
- The evaluation of possible needs for interim measures: decision to implement temporary protective measures may be needed during case handling (for example, no-contact arrangements, temporary adjustments in supervision or alternative working arrangements).

Particular attention was given to refining internal procedures, improving communication practices, and clarifying the respective roles and responsibilities within the complaint management framework.

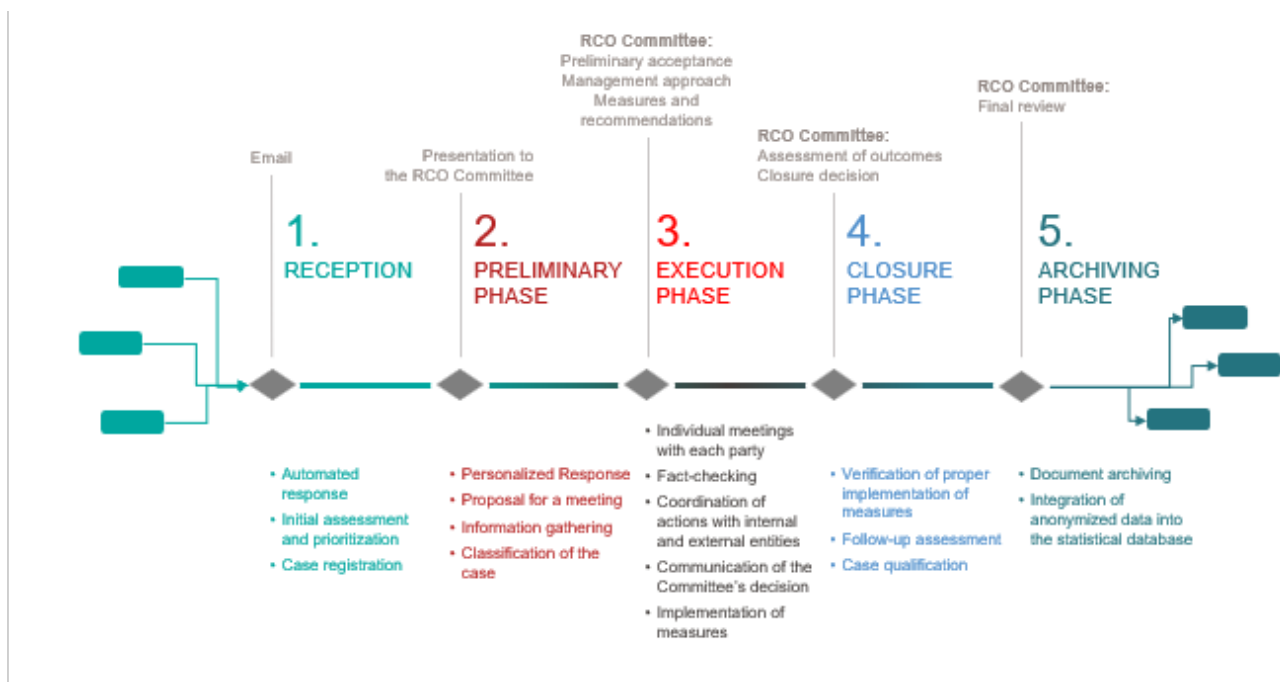
Composition of the RCO

The names of the committee members are published on the [EPFL website](#), ensuring transparency and accessibility for the community. The year was marked by the arrival of three new Committee members, who were integrated progressively.



Respect Compliance Officer	Emmanuel Noyer, since May 2023
President	Andreas Osterwalder, since 2025, Delegate of the Provost for Student Relations
Member	Simon Brunschwig, since 2025, Director of Legal Affairs
Member	Jessica Pallie, since 2025, Director of VPH Office
Member	Eric du Pasquier, since 2018, Director of Security, Safety and Facilities Operations
Member	Anne-Marie Kermarrec since 2025, Associate Vice-President for Post-Graduate Education
Coordinator	Ofelia Tursi, since 2022

Case handling



Each case is handled with careful attention to its specific context and level of sensitivity. Depending on the situation, the RCO:

- provides information and support to the individuals involved;
- registers the case and categorizes it as a complaint, alert, or request;
- conducts an initial assessment and, where applicable, classifies the issues raised;
- coordinates with relevant institutional actors, such as People Experience, EDOC, School or College Deans, where appropriate;
- implements or recommends protective or conservatory measures where necessary;
- supports a structured case-management process, including final qualification where applicable.

The involvement of the Respect Compliance Committee at key decision points helps ensure consistency, shared responsibility, and formal validation of the process.

The archiving of cases also contributes to institutional learning through data collection and annual reporting, supporting the continuous improvement of EPFL's psychosocial risk management framework.

2025 CASES STATISTICS

Overview

In 2025, the RCO opened 99 new cases, comprising 74 alerts, 21 formal complaints, and 4 requests. In addition, 14 cases that were still open at the end of 2024 remained active during 2025. Based on the current case-tracking table, 5 cases remained open as of 31 December 2025, including 4 formal complaints and 1 alert. The classification of cases was further refined and formalised in 2025 to better reflect the variety of situations brought to the RCO's attention. This included the consolidation of a third category: requests.

Classification

The RCO classifies the cases-brought to its attention into three main categories, reflecting the different ways members of the EPFL community may seek support or raise concerns.

1. Complaints

A complaint is a formal procedure initiated by a person who considers themselves directly affected by a situation that may constitute a violation of personal integrity under Directive LEX 1.8.3.

A case is treated as a formal complaint only when certain conditions are met, namely the identification of the parties involved, the expression of the complainant's expectations, and the complainant's informed consent to disclose their identity and the reported facts to the respondent, thereby allowing the RCO to proceed with the formal complaint assessment.

Examples include:

- Psychological harassment reported by an employee against their supervisor
- Discrimination related to exclusion from professional opportunities
- Verbal abuse or threats between colleagues

2. Alerts

An alert refers to information brought to the attention of the RCO without the submission of a formal complaint.

In practice, alerts are diverse and often involve complex or sensitive situations. Although they do not automatically trigger the formal complaint procedure, they call for assessment, clarification, and an appropriate response. Depending on the circumstances, the RCO may provide guidance, help identify the relevant institutional framework, or the most appropriate authorities or support service. In some cases, an alert may also constitute a first step before the submission of a formal complaint.

Examples include:

- A staff member reports concerns anonymously or confidentially about possible inappropriate management practices in a unit, while asking first whether the situation falls within the RCO's mandate
- A professor seeks advice from the RCO on how to address marked tensions or inappropriate behaviour reported within their research group
- A member of the EPFL community wishing to report recurring discriminatory behaviors affecting a group,

3. Requests

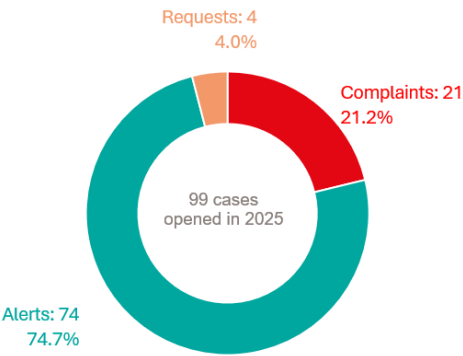
A request refers to an inquiry for information, clarification, or guidance. Unlike complaints and alerts, requests do not relate primarily to a reported event, but to the need for an institutional response or clarification.

While they do not trigger case handling in the strict sense, depending on the situation, the RCO may provide guidance directly, explain the relevant framework, or redirect the person to the most appropriate institutional actor or support service.

Examples include:

- A student in EPFL-UNIL accommodation who is in conflict with their roommate and asks to leave the apartment before the end of their rental contract.
- A PhD candidate asking for the contact details of the Scientific Ombudsperson and indicating difficulties in reaching them.
- A person seeking clarification on whether a situation might fall under discrimination

Cases opened in 2025



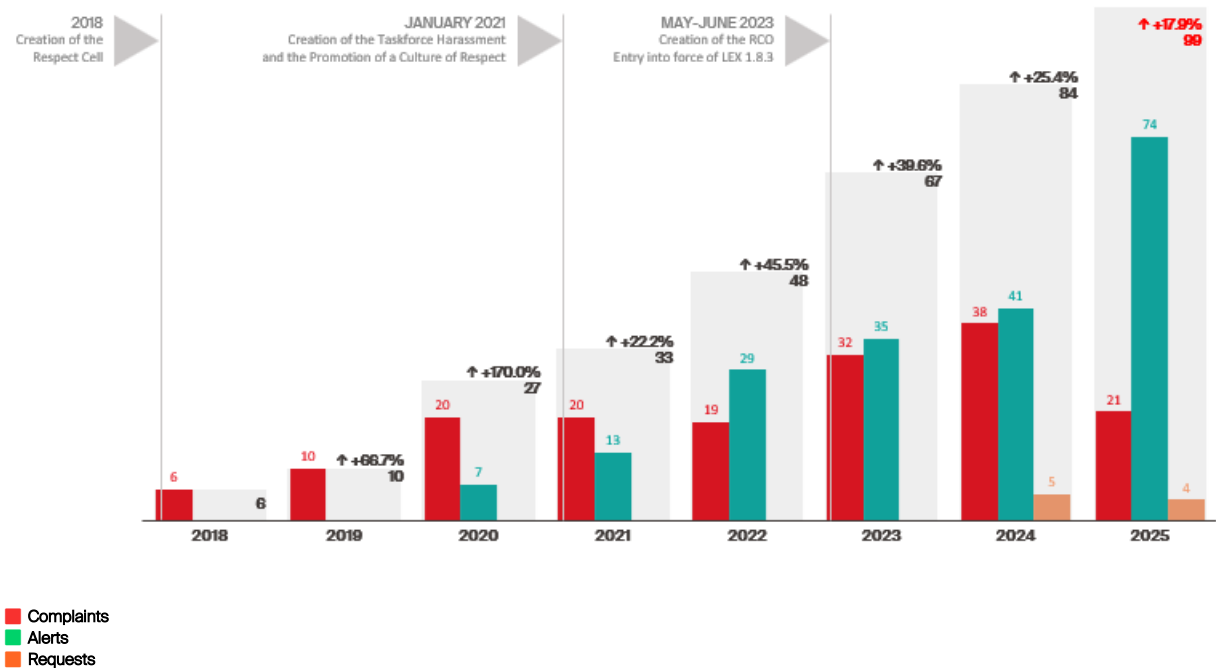
Alerts accounted for the largest share of RCO cases, representing 74.7% of all situations recorded (74 cases). 11 alerts led to formal complaints. This indicates the institutional need to have a space to bring concerns in a confidential manner. It also shows that community members prefer to seek guidance or raise concerns through a confidential, low-threshold channel before considering formal proceedings.

Formal complaints represented 21.2% of cases (21 cases), indicating that only a proportion of cases required the activation of the formal complaint procedure under LEX 1.8.3.

Requests accounted for 4% of cases (4 cases).

Evolution of cases (2018–2025)

Evolution of cases
2018–2025



The total number of cases recorded by the RCO has increased significantly over the past years, rising from 6 cases in 2018 to 84 cases in 2024 and 99 cases in 2025. Comparisons with 2018 should be interpreted with caution, as the system operated only for six months.

Since 2022, the number of alerts has consistently exceeded the number of formal complaints. In 2025, alerts reached 74 cases, a significant increase compared with previous years (35 cases in 2023 and 41 in 2024).

At the same time, the number of complaints decreased to 21 cases in 2025, compared with 32 in 2023 and 38 in 2024. A possible explanation is that some situations are addressed earlier, through discussion, clarification, or guidance, without requiring the activation of a formal complaint procedure.

Focus on alerts

Between 2024 and 2025, the alert channel expanded significantly both in volume and in function. Alerts increased from 41 in 2024 to 74 in 2025, while formal complaints decreased from 38 to 21. This resulted in alerts accounting for a substantially larger share of recorded cases in 2025. These figures suggest that the channel is increasingly being used as an entry point for guidance, clarification, and institutional orientation before any formal procedure is initiated.

This increase concerns a broad range of users and is associated with a marked rise in alerts relating to management issues, non-compliance with rules, conflicts, discrimination, and concerns relating to personal integrity. The data also suggest that many alerts reflect uncertainty, a need for advice, or hesitation to engage immediately in a formal complaint, sometimes in connection with concerns about confidentiality, safety, or retaliation. At the same time, alerts are not left without treatment: they generally lead to assessment, guidance, coordination, or redirection within the relevant institutional framework. The limited number of alerts that later evolved into formal complaints suggests that, in many cases, the alert stage itself made it possible to provide an appropriate initial response or to clarify the most suitable next step.

Creating a secure space for dialogue

Directive LEX 1.8.3 allows members of the EPFL community to engage in confidential and informal discussions with the Respect Compliance Office when complex or sensitive situations arise. These preliminary discussions provide a secure space to clarify the situation, explain the complaint procedure, identify the roles and responsibilities of the different actors involved, and provide guidance on possible next steps. In 2025, preliminary interviews were conducted prior to 19 of the 21 formal complaints, representing 90.5% of all complaints. Depending on the situation, the RCO may provide guidance on how the complaint may be handled, explain possible outcomes, offer support, or redirect the person to other relevant actors, including the Trust and Support Network (TSN), line management, or People Experience.

International political context

In 2025, the broader international political context generated several contacts with the RCO, reflecting tensions and concerns within academic, social, and associative life on campus. For statistical purposes, these situations were counted only when they corresponded to distinct cases. Where several alerts concerned the same incident and the same person or group (Vivapoly 2025), they were recorded as a single case to avoid distorting the statistics. In the 2025 data, these situations corresponded to two formal complaints and two alerts.

Entry points for contacting the RCO

The RCO's dedicated email address (respect@epfl.ch) remained the main entry point in 2025 (80%), compared with 84% in 2024.

Other cases reach the RCO through direct contact with the respect Compliance Officer (15%) or through referrals from internal stakeholders such as the Person of Trust, People Experience, or academic leadership (5%).

These different entry points illustrate the integration of the RCO within EPFL's broader support network and the role of institutional actors in guiding community members toward the appropriate reporting channel.

Assessment criteria: urgency and impact

In 2024, as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen case management, the RCO introduced two additional assessment criteria - urgency and impact, which continued to be applied in 2025 to support the assessment and prioritization of formal complaints.

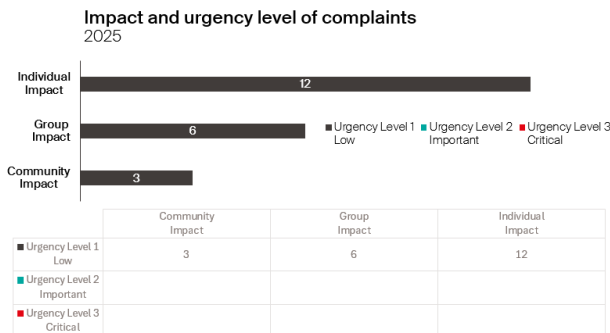
Urgency supports the prioritization of cases requiring rapid attention, while impact indicates whether a situation affects an individual, a group, or the institution as a whole. These criteria help evaluate both the time sensitivity and the scope of a situation, ensuring that responses are timely, proportionate, and adapted to the needs of those involved.

Urgency Level: the urgency criterion indicates the required response time and level of priority assigned to each case:

Level 1 – Non-priority: Standard follow-up; no immediate action required.

Level 2 – Important: Requires a rapid intervention, within 36 hours.

Level 3 – Critical: Requires immediate action, to be addressed within 24 hours. with the frequent involvement of EPFL's Response and Safety Service (SIS) .



The impact criterion refers to the scope of the situation reported:

- **Individual:** the situation affects a single person.
- **Group:** the situation affects a group of individuals, such as a team or research unit.
- **Institutional:** the situation has broader implications for the institution. In such cases, Mediacom may be involved to support institutional communication and alignment.

While these criteria provide a useful framework for evaluating both the scope and time sensitivity of cases.

Compared with 2024, the 2025 data show a clear decrease in the level of urgency of the complaints handled, with no cases classified at urgency levels 2 or 3 in 2025, whereas 2024 included twelve level 2 cases and one level 3 case. In parallel, the distribution of impact also shifted, with 2025 complaints affecting mainly individuals, while situations with group or institutional impact were less frequent than in 2024.

Temporary measures in response to complaints

During the management of formal complaints, temporary measures may be introduced when necessary to ensure that the process unfolds in a safe and structured manner. These measures may serve different purposes depending on the situation.

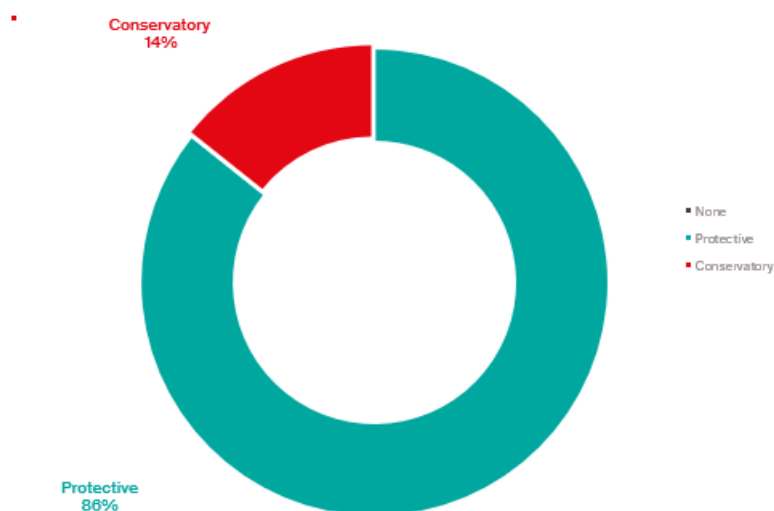
Protective measures are primarily intended to support and protect the individuals involved during the complaint process. They may include practical arrangements designed to reduce tension or prevent further difficulties while the case is being examined.

Example: the offer of therapeutic support for a person requiring psychological support.

Conservatory measures, by contrast, are intended to preserve the integrity of the process itself, for example through the preservation of evidence or relevant documentation.

Example: Conservatory measures may include the preservation of relevant documentation, evidence, or records necessary to safeguard the integrity of the process.

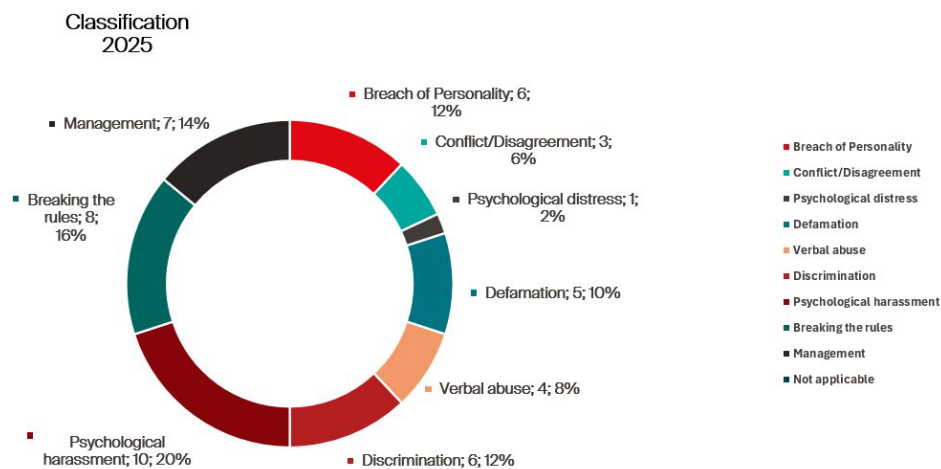
Implementation of measures 2025



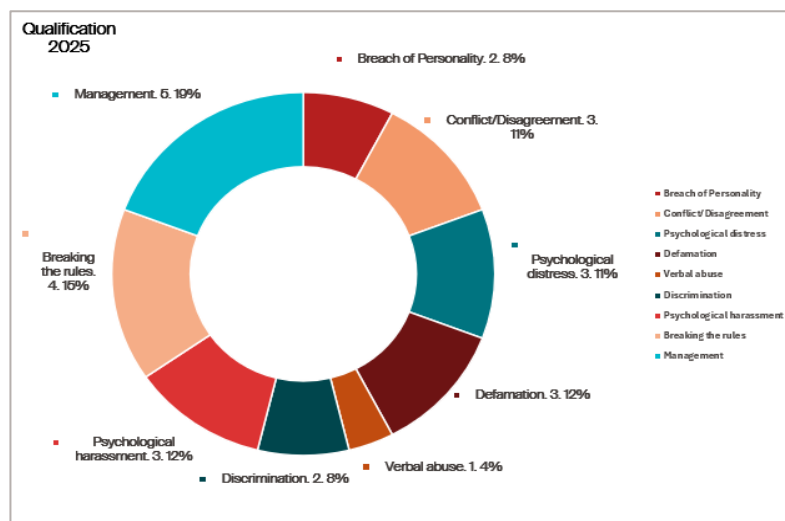
Initial classification versus final qualification

As part of its continuous improvement efforts, the RCO continued to apply the methodological approach introduced in 2024 for the assessment of formal complaints. This approach distinguishes between the initial classification of a complaint, based on how the situation is described by the complainant, and the final qualification of the facts, based on the RCO's assessment of the case.

This distinction remains important in practice, as it allows the RCO to consider both the subjective experience reported at the outset and the outcome of a structured analysis of the facts, context, and available evidence. This does not diminish the experience reported by individuals but highlights the importance of a structured assessment process.



Versus



It should be noted that both classification and qualification may involve multiple criteria within a single formal complaint. Several alleged issues may be reported and multiple elements may be confirmed or identified

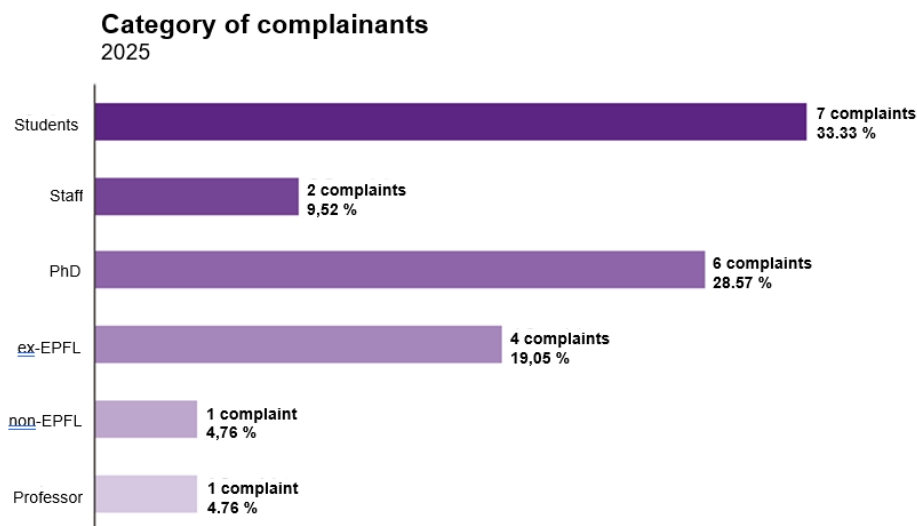
during the qualification process. As a result, the total number of classifications and qualifications may exceed the total number of formal complaints.

In certain cases, it was not possible to proceed with the qualification of the issue due to a lack of follow-up from the reporting individual. When essential information was not provided or communication was discontinued, the RCO was unable to conduct a full assessment (not applicable).

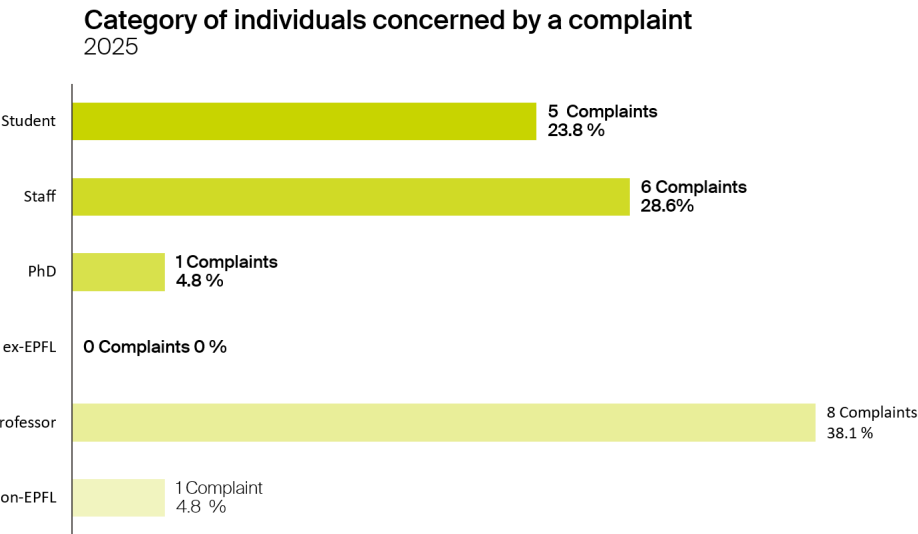
In other cases, the final qualification differed from the initial classification, either because the situation fell under a different category after assessment or because the complaint was not upheld. In 2025, no cases were qualified as sexual harassment. This should be interpreted with caution and should not be understood as evidence that such situations do not occur. Existing research, including the UniSAFE survey, shows that sexual harassment and gender-based violence in academic settings are often underreported, due to uncertainty about definitions, hesitation to report, fear of consequences, or difficulties in identifying behaviours as misconduct.

Overall, these findings underline the importance of continuing efforts to clarify definitions, strengthen communication, and maintain accessible reporting channels, in order to support both accurate reporting and appropriate case handling.

Distribution of complainants and respondents

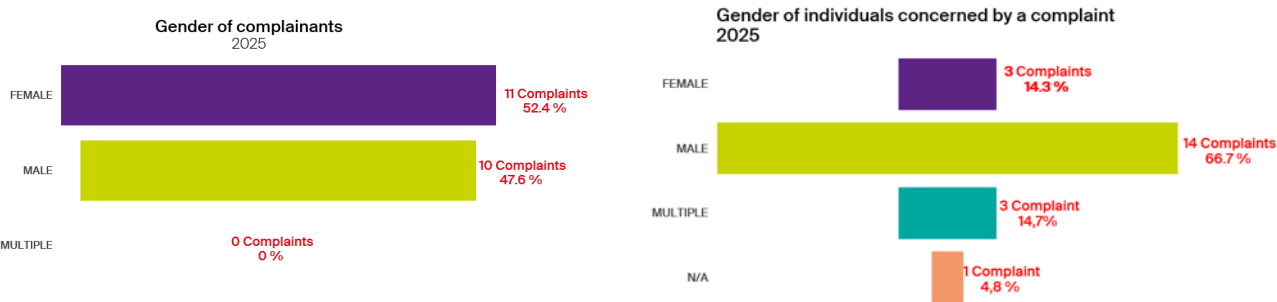


The categories of complainants in 2025 show that formal complaints were submitted by individuals from a broad range of roles within, and in some cases beyond, the EPFL community. The number of complainants does not necessarily correspond to the total number of formal complaints, as some cases may involve more than one complainant. Students and PhD candidates represented a significant proportion of complainants, while administrative and technical staff were less frequently represented. This should be interpreted with caution, as some complaints submitted by former EPFL members concerned employment-related situations involving administrative or technical staff who had recently left the institution.



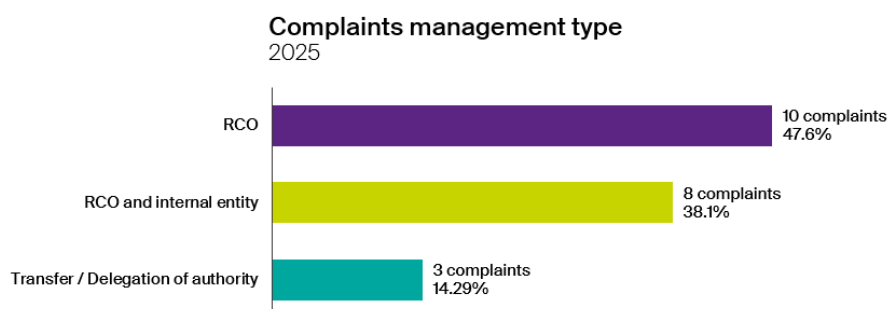
The categories of respondents in 2025 also reflect the diversity of roles within the EPFL community. Individuals in managerial or supervisory positions, including professors and collaborators are represented, which may be explained by their responsibilities within teams and their involvement in decision-making processes. At the same time, a number of cases involve interactions at peer level, including between students or between staff members. These figures suggest that the situations brought to the RCO arise across different types of professional and academic relationships, without being limited to a specific category or hierarchical level.

Gender distribution of complainants and respondents



The gender distribution of complainants in 2025 was relatively balanced, with 11 female complainants and 10 male complainants. By contrast, the gender distribution of respondents was more uneven, with a clear majority of male respondents. A similar trend was observed in 2024. This may partly reflect the distribution of roles involving supervision, authority, or decision-making in certain parts of the institution. At this stage, these figures should be treated as an indicator requiring continued observation over time, rather than as a standalone conclusion.

Complaint handling and distribution of responsibilities



Complaints may be handled in different ways depending on the nature of the concerns raised, the expectations of the person filing the report, and the applicable institutional framework. The RCO's involvement may range from confidential guidance, referral to relevant support services, to a more structured assessment, recommendations, or escalation to the competent bodies.

Across all complaints brought to the RCO, particular attention was given to confidentiality, transparency toward complainants, and the protection of the rights of all persons concerned. During preliminary interviews, complainants frequently raised questions about how their complaint would be handled, what information would need to be collected, and under what conditions information might be shared. These points were clarified at an early stage, including the RCO's role, the possible involvement of other internal or external actors, and the purpose of any such involvement. Any sharing of information was limited to what was necessary to assess the situation, ensure appropriate follow-up, respect the rights of the persons concerned, and preserve the integrity of the process. Where the matter fell under the responsibility of another competent authority, complainants were informed of the relevant internal or external authority to contact. Information-sharing was limited to what was necessary to assess the situation, ensure appropriate follow-up, respect the rights of the persons concerned, and preserve the integrity of the process.

Complaint follow-up: types of actions or recommendations

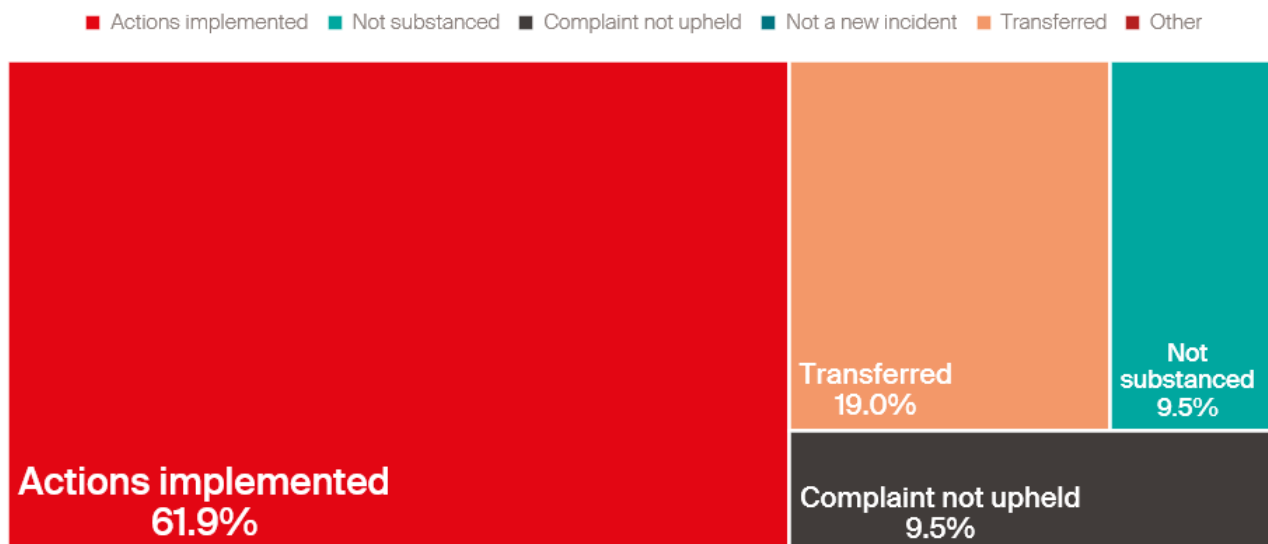
The RCO Committee formulates recommendations adapted to the nature of each case, and particular attention is given to their follow-up and implementation. In 2025, the Respect Compliance Officer monitored the implementation of recommendations, in coordination with the relevant institutional actors. Depending on the case, follow-up measures may include reminders of institutional rules, formal managerial discussions, written follow-up, training, coaching, or referral to disciplinary procedures handled by the competent authority. These measures may be implemented by the managerial line, People Experience, academic leadership, or other competent institutional actors, depending on the nature of the recommendations.

This approach ensures that the outcomes of the complaint-handling process are translated into concrete measures, while maintaining consistency with institutional frameworks and responsibilities. No external investigation was recommended to the EPFL Presidency in 2025.

Complaint closure

The closure of a case is formally decided during a Respect Compliance Committee meeting and documented on the basis of criteria reflecting the nature, evolution, and outcome of the case.

Reason for complaint closure 2025



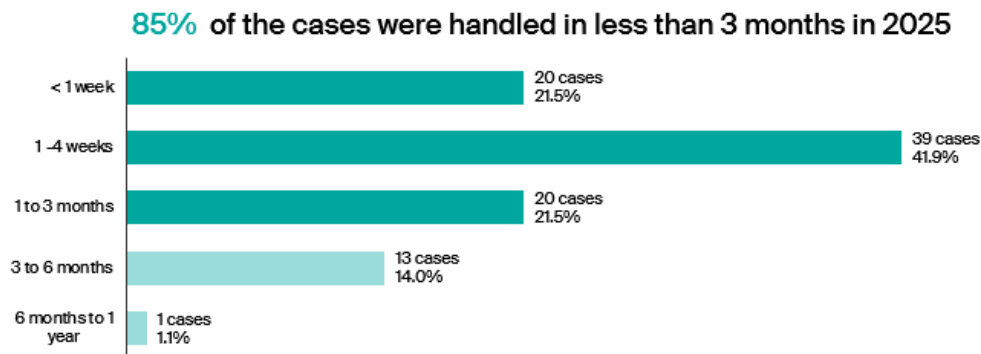
The reasons for complaint closure in 2025 point to a positive development compared with the previous year. Most formal complaints were closed following the implementation of actions or recommendations (61.9%), showing that, in the majority of cases, the process led to concrete measures.

In 2025, closures linked to lack of response or disengagement declined, notably as a result of more structured case follow-up and the formalization of a follow-up system providing for up to two reminders where complainants did not respond. This may indicate more sustained engagement in the complaint-handling process, although the trend will need to be monitored over time.

A distinction should be made between complaints closed as 'not substantiated' and those closed as 'not upheld'. 'Not substantiated' refers to complaints that were examined but where the available evidence did not establish the alleged facts or misconduct. By contrast, 'not upheld' refers to complaints that could not be pursued under the applicable framework, for example because the matter fell outside the RCO's remit, the conditions for proceeding were not met, or the available information did not allow the complaint to move forward. This does not imply that the concerns raised were necessarily unfounded.

Duration of recorded cases (complaints, alerts and requests)

The duration of a case is calculated in calendar days, from the date the written message is received through the official reporting channel to the date the case is formally closed by the Respect Compliance Office Committee.



In 2025, 85% of recorded cases were closed within three months, a proportion comparable to 2024. This suggests that the overall timeframe for case handling remained broadly stable. However, the introduction of more regular follow-up, including weekly meetings, appears to have contributed to a more consistent and structured monitoring of cases, particularly by reducing the number of longer-running situations. In this respect, the number of cases lasting between six months and one year decreased from three in 2024 to one in 2025.

At the same time, longer case durations are connected to factors such as the availability of the parties involved, sick leave, or the complexity of the situation. Overall, the 2025 figures indicate a solid level of efficiency, while also highlighting that some cases require more time to be managed appropriately.

PROMOTING A CULTURE OF RESPECT

Awareness raising and activities

In 2025, the Respect Compliance Office (RCO) continued the work initiated in previous years in close collaboration with the Trust and Support Network (TSN), with the shared objective of strengthening prevention and fostering a respectful institutional culture, in line with Directive LEX 1.8.3. In an institution marked by regular turnover and new arrivals, communication and awareness-raising remained an important part of ensuring that the role of the system, expected standards of behaviour, and available support mechanisms were known and understood across the EPFL community.

Through coordinated activities with the TSN, as well as through more regular exchanges with People Experience and EDOC, the RCO helped disseminate key messages related to respect, appropriate behaviour, and the provisions of LEX 1.8.3. Regular coordination meetings with stakeholders supported alignment between case-management practices and preventive communication initiatives, thereby reinforcing coherence across institutional processes.

In 2025, the RCO and TSN also contributed significantly to the external evaluation of the existing system. This included a detailed self-assessment of strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement, which was formally shared as part of the evaluation process. As a result of the significant time and resources devoted to this evaluation exercise, the RCO's participation in institutional events and delivery of presentations were more limited than in previous years

Participations at EPFL information, thematic or festive events

- Centers and Platforms presentation – 18 March 2025
- ENAC-PATT Days – 11 June 2025
- PolySi – 29 August 2025
- Conflict Resolution Training – 9 October 2025

Live presentation, coaching and trainings:

- Vivapoly – 22 May 2025
- Journée des Services EPFL – 23 September 2025
- Health Days – October 2025
- PhD Welcome – 6 November 2025

Focus on Trust Point



- Throughout 2025, the RCO continued to raise awareness of Trust Point as a support tool for members of the EPFL community, particularly by highlighting the usefulness of the Glossary section.
- Between its launch on 15 September 2023 and December 2025, the Trust Point platform recorded 81,686 individual page views. Usage was distributed across all categories of the EPFL community. This confirms that Trust Point is consulted broadly across the institution and acts as a shared reference point for accessing institutional resources and guidance.
- Within this ecosystem, pages related to the RCO accounted for approximately 2.7% of service consultations. While this proportion is naturally lower than that of services addressing general wellbeing or health support, the data suggest that Trust Point effectively directs users toward the RCO when questions arise regarding reporting mechanisms, workplace conduct, or integrity-related concerns by all the community.

LESSONS LEARNED IN 2025: EVOLUTION OF INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

The experience of 2025 confirms that the management of psychosocial risks cannot rely on a single mechanism or actor. Effective case handling depends on a broader institutional ecosystem in which prevention, support, reporting, assessment, and follow-up are clearly coordinated. The RCO plays a specific role within this framework, but its effectiveness also depends on its capacity to work with other relevant actors, including support services, line management, People Experience, academic leadership, and other competent bodies.

A first lesson from 2025 is therefore the importance of coordination. Complex situations often require several forms of response at the same time: listening and support for the individuals concerned, clarification of the applicable framework, assessment of the reported facts, and, where appropriate, implementation of measures or referral to the competent authority. Structured coordination helps ensure that these responses remain coherent, proportionate, and respectful of confidentiality.

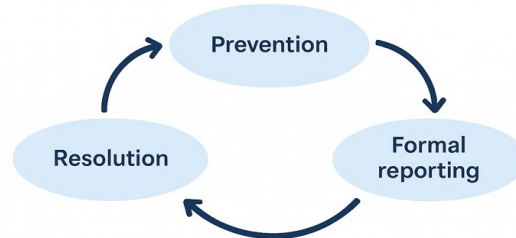


A second lesson is the value of maintaining a confidential and accessible space for alerts. The increase in alerts shows that members of the EPFL community need a place where they can raise concerns, seek advice, and clarify their options without immediately entering into a formal complaint procedure. This space is important not only for individual guidance, but also for prevention, as it allows concerns to be identified earlier and helps direct individuals towards the most appropriate response.

The experience of 2025 also confirms the value of a continuous improvement cycle linking prevention, reporting, case handling, and institutional learning. Prevention supports awareness-raising and earlier identification of concerns; reporting provides a structured entry point for situations requiring assessment; and case handling generates lessons that can be reintegrated into prevention, guidance, and institutional practice. In this sense, the RCO's activity contributes not only to the handling of individual cases, but also to the progressive strengthening of the overall psychosocial risk management framework.

Prevention, Reporting, and Resolution to Manage Psychosocial Risks

Collaboration between the formal reporting system and various stakeholders creates a cycle that strengthens the institution's capacity to prevent, identify, and address psychosocial risks.



Another important lesson concerns the distinction between the initial classification of a case and its final qualification. This distinction highlights the importance of expert analysis. Situations are often complex, and the way they are initially described may differ from the outcome of a structured assessment of the facts, context, and available information. This does not diminish the experience reported by individuals, but underlines the need for a careful, objective, and methodical process. It also confirms the importance of continuing to clarify key notions related to psychosocial risks, including harassment, discrimination, conflict, and breaches of personal integrity.

Confidentiality remains a fundamental condition for trust in the reporting mechanism. It is often the first element that enables individuals to come forward, share sensitive concerns, and engage with the system. Maintaining a confidential framework is therefore essential not only to protect the persons involved, but also to ensure that difficult situations can be identified, assessed, and handled at an appropriate stage. Mental health support also emerged as an important dimension of case handling in 2025. The situations brought to the RCO often involved significant psychological vulnerability, whether or not the persons concerned were already receiving external support. This was reflected, in particular, in the financial support provided for 35 psychological consultation sessions benefiting 7 individuals. More broadly, it underlines the importance of continuing to strengthen the links between case handling, psychosocial support, and EPFL's wider work on mental health.

Finally, the experience of 2025 provides important indications for the future system. The future framework should preserve a dedicated space for alerts, in addition to formal complaint procedures. It should also ensure clear roles, strong coordination between the actors involved, robust confidentiality safeguards, and sound data management and reporting. These elements will be essential to maintain trust in the system, support appropriate responses to complex cases, and ensure continuity between prevention, reporting, case handling, and institutional learning.

Conclusion and perspectives

The year 2025 confirms the value of having a structured internal system to respond to a wide range of issues relating to psychosocial risks. The developments observed show that recourse to the RCO is not limited to the filing of formal complaints, but forms part of a broader dynamic of reporting, handling, and supporting sensitive situations. They also indicate that the system responds to a real need within the community and is gradually being recognized as a trusted framework for people facing difficulties that call for listening, clarification, and an appropriate response.

The year also highlights the progress observed in case follow-up and closure underlines the contribution of regular functioning, clarified criteria, and sound coordination between the actors involved. It also shows that this type of system must continue to evolve on the basis of experience gained and lessons drawn from the situations encountered.

The future implementation of a new system, including external mechanisms for receiving complaints and conducting initial investigations, will require particular attention to the clarity of the framework, coordination between the different bodies involved, continuity in case follow-up, and the consistent management of data. The challenge will be to develop the system in continuity with the work already undertaken, while preserving its clarity, coherence, and the trust of individuals concerned.

The RCO would like to thank the members of the Committee, as well as all partners and interlocutors who contributed throughout the year to the functioning of the system and the handling of situations.

RCO Unit, May 2026.

ANNEX I - Key dates

JUNE (6 months) 2018	Creation of the Respect Cell The Respect Cell was created as a dedicated point of contact for members of the EPFL community who had experienced or witnessed discrimination, mobbing, sexual harassment, or other breaches of personal integrity.
JANUARY 2021	Creation of the Task Force on Harassment and the Promotion of a Culture of Respect Pivotal advancement for the Respect Cell by facilitating its substantial involvement in the overhaul of EPFL's support and formal complaint management process.
MAY 2023	Creation of the Respect Compliance Office The Respect Cell transitioned into the Respect Compliance Office, with the appointment of the Respect Compliance Officer and the continuation of coordination functions during the reorganization of the system.
JUNE 2023	Activation of LEX 1.8.3 – Directive on Psychosocial Risks at EPFL The activation of LEX 1.8.3 marked an important step in strengthening EPFL's framework for the prevention and management of psychosocial risks.
SEPTEMBER 2023	Launch of the Trust Point Platform (web and mobile) The entry point to the Trust Support Network (TSN), for questions related to psychosocial risks.
OCTOBER 2024	Launch of the evaluation of the TSN and the RCO structures. The evaluation of the TSN and RCO structures was launched in October 2024. Areas for improvement were validated by management in April 2025. The analysis continued in 2025, leading to recommendations for the development of the psychosocial risk prevention and management system. In December 2025, EPFL management approved the new system and the related directives.