

ETHICS OFFICER

Annual Report 2023



Featured Article:

“Key Principles of Ethics Offices”

by Ms Elia Yi Armstrong
former Director of the Ethics Office
of the United Nations

ANNUAL REPORT
1 January – 31 December 2023

ENGLISH

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INTRODUCTION & MISSION

This 2023 Annual Report of the Ethics Officer builds on the four previous ones (2019-2022) and covers the period of 1 January – 31 December 2023.

The Ethics Officer acts as a **focal point for ethics-related questions and standards in the Council of Europe**, enjoys **functional independence** and is guided by the Staff Regulations and Rules, the Ethics Framework of the Council of Europe, established practice, accepted international standards, and professional judgment.

The main functions include:

- **providing guidance and advice on a confidential** basis to Secretariat members and other persons participating in the Council of Europe activities on ethical conduct and situations of conflicts of interest, gifts, hospitality, decorations, outside activities, declarations of interest, procurement and grant awards, whistle blowing and work-related behaviour, etc.;
- **providing advice** to the Organisation on the interpretation of ethics-related strategies and rules and on measures to prevent retaliation, etc.;
- **monitoring the effectiveness** of the Organisation's ethical standards, practice and procedures and advise on modifications as appropriate;
- establishing **awareness-raising activities** and **training**.

While enjoying functional independence, the Ethics Officer is accountable to and reports directly to the Secretary General on an ad hoc basis as well as through annual reports. These reports, which are also transmitted to the Committee of Ministers, outline ethics-related issues and activities during the past year and may also include considerations and recommendations aimed at improving the system.

MESSAGE FROM THE ETHICS OFFICER

The year 2023 was marked by a number of achievements, particularly, the fact that the **new Ethics Framework** of the Council of Europe became operational. The adoption of new Staff Regulations by the Committee of Ministers in 2021, followed by new Staff Rules adopted by the Secretary General in 2022, paved the way for the new Ethics Framework, which consists of the Code of Conduct and various Policies.

Firstly, the new [Code of Conduct](#) serves as the central pillar of this framework and establishes a set of ethical standards. The Code is based on core values, as they have been identified by staff members themselves - professionalism, integrity and respect – and includes the fundamental principles that underpin these values: independence, trustworthiness, responsibility, dignity, diversity and discretion. Secondly, the new [Policy on Respect and Dignity](#) contains standards of collegial conduct and describes unacceptable behaviour as well as the support mechanisms that are available in this regard. Thirdly, the new [Speak Up Policy](#) (whistleblowing policy) on mandatory reporting of wrongdoing also ensures protection for those who report. This is the first comprehensive whistleblowing instrument in the Council of Europe. Furthermore, a new [Policy on the use of social media by Secretariat members](#) was adopted.

In the same year, the Ethics Officer position became a full-time **permanent function** and a new **Mandate of the Ethics Officer** was adopted, clarifying the role and its responsibilities. The staffing situation needs further attention in order for this Office to be able to deal with all its tasks effectively.

While the new Ethics Framework is **mandatory for Secretariat members**, other persons participating in Council of Europe activities (e.g. PACE members, judges, intergovernmental and independent experts and consultants) are only “expected” to uphold the values and standards outlined to the extent that they are applicable to them. This is a weak part of the system. It is indeed true that various mechanisms and bodies of the Council of Europe, such as the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the European Court of Human Rights have their own codes of ethics, but these have a different focus, apply only in respect of their members and have their own execution mechanisms. It would be important to ensure uniform ethical norms for all categories of persons participating in our activities, at least regarding in-house inter-personal relations and behaviour, respect and dignity.

A major focus now and in the future lies in the **implementation** of the ethical standards throughout the Organisation; e.g. regular awareness-raising events, needs-based training for staff members and evaluation of the system. The need for support from managers was stressed during an exchange of views with the Senior Management Group (SMG) in October 2023. Awareness raising concerning the new instruments started in 2023, with information on the

Intranet and was followed by the presentation of the details of the new instruments of the Ethics Framework for all Secretariat members (in person and online) in December; this event was opened by the Secretary General.

*The number of requests from Secretariat members for **advice** by the Ethics Officer increased in 2023. The advisory function remains a crucial task of the Ethics Officer. As in the past, this service is based on trust and strict confidentiality. The feedback received from colleagues is encouraging.*

*The current Report contains a featured article on a pertinent topic “**Key Principles of Ethics Offices in Intergovernmental Organisations**” to provide readers with some more food for thought. I am very grateful to Ms Elia Yi Armstrong, former Director of the Ethics Office of the United Nations, and a longstanding member of the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations (ENMO), for her valuable contribution with this article. Exchange of best practices with other international organisations has been – and continues to be - instrumental in the development of our Ethics Office.*

The last part of this report includes some reflections and recommendations for the years to come. Again, while the establishment of the Ethics framework is an achievement, implementing and maintaining an ethical culture is an on-going task requiring dialogue with all parties involved, as codes of ethics and policies need to be “living instruments” that can develop over time.

Finally, I would like to thank the Secretary General for entrusting me with the role of Ethics Officer during the past years. I would also like to thank colleagues for their support and assistance, in particular Ms Bianca Valente, GRECO Secretariat, for her help and professional work, and send my best wishes to my successor.

*Björn Janson
Ethics Officer of the Council of Europe*

ETHICS ADVICE 2023

This section provides information on independent advice provided in 2023 to Secretariat members and other persons participating in the activities of the Council of Europe. It illustrates the range of ethical issues on which the Ethics Officer has been consulted. All matters relevant to the ethics function were responded to through confidential advice in writing, sometimes following meetings in person or online. Some issues have been solved directly with the persons concerned and some in dialogue within the relevant hierarchies. This section also includes information on advice provided in relation to the risk analysis carried out by the Directorate of Internal Oversight (DIO) in its monitoring of the annual declarations of interest of Secretariat members.

ADVICE PROVIDED

In 2023, the Ethics Officer provided advice in **105** cases, i.e., a considerable increase compared to the previous year. That said, a lot more (some 200 cases) were received in the “Ethics mailbox” but were not registered as they were either not submitted by persons entitled to do so or were not within the mandate of the Ethics Officer. Around **30%** of the registered requests were received from staff in the field offices. The majority of requests for advice concerned situations of conflicts of interest. Some had started as requests for legal advice (e.g., legal interpretation of a contract) which then triggered a request to the Ethics Officer on a possible conflict of interest. The large majority of the requests came from Secretariat members directly, and only a few originated from committees and other persons participating in Council of Europe activities (e.g. experts, contracted service providers, etc.).

The Ethics Officer intervened in **11** cases of identified risks of conflicting interests following the DIO annual review of the declarations of interest submitted by staff. These interventions resulted in exchanges of views and advice to the staff members concerned on how to prevent or mitigate risks of conflicts of interest, or on how to provide more details in respect of insufficient declarations, etc. One of these cases led to strategic advice to the Secretary General (see below).

ADVICE BY CATEGORY	2023
Conflict of interests - Procurement / Grant Award	20
Outside activities	19
Close relatives	4
Gifts/decorations	14
Other Conflicts of interests	8
Reputational risks	3
CoE Internal Regulations	9
Work-related behaviour	10
Declarations of interest – risks of conflicts of interests	11
Manifestly ill-founded	7
TOTAL	105

The data in the table above is reflected in the graphical format below (manifestly ill-founded excluded):



EXPECTED CONDUCT IN FREQUENTLY ADDRESSED AREAS

Questions on how to handle situations where gifts or other advantages are offered to Secretariat members as well as issues relating to staff members' rights with regard to exercising outside activities are frequent. The new Staff Rules contain changes in these particular areas, and a reminder of these rules follows below.

Gifts and other favours (Staff Rules 180.1-4)

The seeking or acceptance of any form of advantage may have an adverse effect on Secretariat members' independence and impartiality as well as their obligation to avoid conflicts of interest (whether perceived, potential or real). Consequently, our policy is clear: **We must refrain from seeking or accepting any gifts or advantages (for ourselves and for others) as a main rule.** Secretariat members are advised to be proactive in notifying third parties in this regard.

Only in exceptional situations, where an offer of a gift would appear consistent with "normal practice", and it would be impolite to refuse, a gift may be accepted, provided the value is reasonably estimated at EUR 50 or less. If the value exceeds this threshold, the gift shall be refused and/or immediately returned. These situations are not always easy to assess and they may require a quick reaction. Our policy not to accept gifts is therefore a safeguard which can always be referred to. Requesting advice from the Ethics Officer is also possible even at short notice.

It should be noted that the definition of gifts does not include token or souvenir items of a low value, which are offered for promotional purposes, e.g. low-cost promotional items, notebooks, pens, tote bags with a logo, desk gadgets and other souvenirs, etc. However, a bottle of wine would be considered a gift!

Accepted gifts/advantages must be declared to Protocol (except souvenirs, etc.) A special MSA form ([9225](#)) is available for such declarations.

It must be noted that those who are involved in procurement/grant awards, for example supervising or dealing with contracting consultants, purchasing goods, etc. are not allowed to accept any gifts, advantages or hospitalities (with no exception) from persons or entities that are, or are seeking to be, in a contractual relationship with the Council of Europe.

Moreover, in the spirit of these rules, the same behaviour should be expected in a reverse situation, i.e. Secretariat members and others participating in Council of Europe activities should refrain from providing gifts or other advantages to third parties. But also in this context, token items, etc. of a low value for promotional purposes would not be

considered gifts.

Outside activities (Staff Rules 160.1-7)

Outside activities (formerly secondary activities) may be allowed, provided these are not incompatible with the aims of the Organisation, would not bring reputational risks or be in conflict with the staff member's duties, work conditions, working hours, etc. These general conditions apply to all types of outside activities.

Furthermore, the Staff Rules make a distinction between two types of outside activities. Firstly, outside activities with relevance for the Council of Europe, i.e. that would benefit the Organisation or the staff member in his/her professional capacity (e.g. lecturing or publishing an article on a CoE-related topic) require prior authorisation by the direct superior and the Director General/Director. (Colleagues in outside offices are advised also to keep the head of the office fully informed, as appropriate). Please note that such activities cannot be remunerated, with one exception: publications outside the Council of Europe. The other type of outside activities which have no relevance for the Council of Europe, may be undertaken without authorisation, provided the general conditions (above) are respected. However, if such activities are remunerated, prior authorisation by the Director of Human Resources would be required.

Please note that these requirements apply to all Secretariat members, including when on leave from the Organisation.

Requests for outside activities should be made using MSA forms [3045](#), [3046](#).

STRATEGIC ADVICE

The Ethics Officer has provided **strategic advice** to various bodies of the Organisation, including the following:

- To Private Office, in close consultation with DGA, DIO and DLAPIL during the drafting of the new Mandate of the Ethics Officer that subsequently was adopted by the Secretary General and took effect as of 1 November 2023;
- Advice to DGA regarding contractual issues for renting office space and parking from the private sector (January);
- Discussion and advice to DGA on the finalisation of the draft Speak Up Policy (February/March);
- Advice to the Secretariat of the Venice Commission on draft principles of conduct of VC members (March);
- Advice (together with DLAPIL) to DGA on the harmonisation of conflicts of interest clauses used throughout the Council of Europe (February/May);
- Opinion to DGA/DLAPIL on the meaning of confidentiality principles in relation to confidential counsellors (May);
- Advice to Private Office on restrictions to Staff members' engagement in outside organisations to prevent conflicts of interest (July);
- Advice to DGI on declarations of interest provisions for officials of the Register of damage caused by the Russian Federation aggression against Ukraine (June/September);
- Opinion to the Directorate of Programme Co-ordination (DPC) on preventing undue advantages for staff when organising technical assistance conferences (September);
- Advice to the Directorate of Programme and Budget (DPB) on the code of conduct of the Management Board of the Pension Reserve Fund (July/September) and in respect of declarations of interest by members of the Budget Committee (October);
- Exchanges of views with and advice to DLAPIL on exclusion criteria when hiring former Council of Europe staff members as consultants (October).

IN-HOUSE DIALOGUE

The Ethics Officer exchanged views and discussed the development of the Ethics Framework and function with the **Oversight Advisory Committee** (OAC) on three occasions, 15 March, 8 June and 20 September. The views of the OAC were duly taken into account, in particular in respect of the development of the Ethics Office and the drafting of the new Mandate of the Ethics Officer. I would like to thank the outgoing OAC for their co-operation and support and welcome the recently appointed OAC to continue this important work.

An informal **Co-ordination Group on Ethics** (Ethics Officer, DHR and DIO) was established in 2023. The Group meets on a monthly basis to discuss common issues and synergies, in particular regarding awareness raising and training.

On 17 October, the Ethics Officer was invited to the **Senior Management Group (SMG)**, led by the Secretary General. This exchange of views on current work and priorities was followed by a discussion on the potential involvement of the Ethics Officer in training activities aimed at various entities of the Organisation. One of the focal points of the meeting was to stress managers' role in ensuring the implementation of the new ethical standards and thus to lead by example.

Besides these meetings, the Ethics Officer also exchanged views with a number of other internal bodies and mechanisms, including the Confidential Counsellors and the Staff Committee.

TRAINING AND OUTREACH

The entry into force of the normative ethical standards was central in 2023, and the adoption of the new instruments was followed up with several news items on the Intranet page of the Council of Europe as well as on the homepages of the Ethics Officer (external and internal). The implementation of the new standards will be of critical importance in the years to come. A start-up event for this purpose was the **Presentation of the Ethics Framework** to all Secretariat members on 1 December 2023 in Palais de l'Europe as well as online. The meeting was opened by the Secretary General, followed by remarks by the Director General of Administration, Director of Human Resources and the President of the Staff Committee. The meeting was moderated by the Head of the Digital Communications and Editorial Division of the Directorate of Communications (DC). The Ethics Officer, the Head of the Performance and Well-being section (DHR), the Head of Investigation (DIO) and a colleague from DC presented the new instruments in detail (photo below). DC also offered mugs with our ethical values, which have been distributed to all staff to promote our ethical standards.



Presentation of the Ethics Framework, Council of Europe, December 2023

The **e-learning trainings on 'Ethics'** and **'Fraud Awareness and Prevention'** launched in 2019 had been completed by more than 90 % (Ethics) and 83 % (Fraud Awareness and Prevention) of the staff by the end of 2023. As a result of the entry into force of the new Staff Regulations, Rules and ethical standards, these tools need to be updated or even replaced. This is a priority for 2024 and discussions with DIO and DHR are on-going.

Since 2023, the Ethics Officer (together with DIO and DHR) delivers **presentations of the Ethics Framework for all newly recruited Secretariat members** (some 7-10 occasions per year).

ENMO (SYNERGIES WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS)

The Ethics Officer of the Council of Europe is a member of the [Ethics Network for Multilateral Organisations](#) (**ENMO**) which brings together senior officials responsible for the ethics functions in intergovernmental organisations. This Network, the membership of which continued to grow in 2023 (currently 52 members), provides a forum for exchange of information and best practice for ethics offices/ethics functions in multilateral organisations. ENMO has its own platform for information on specific issues and its terms of reference are provided by its own Charter. The ENMO organises annual conferences, quarterly meetings and seminars.

The Ethics Officer participated in the ENMO quarterly meetings in 2023 and in the 15th Annual Conference of ENMO, hosted by the Asian Development Bank, in Manila, (12-15 September 2023), focusing on the institutional framework and governance structures of ethics offices, the design of ethics programmes and impact measurement. Moreover, the Ethics Officer provided inputs to the process of establishing common **ENMO standards/guidelines on responsibilities and practice for ethics offices**, which may be agreed in 2024. The experience within ENMO has been useful during the build-up process of the Council of Europe Ethics Office and the development of our standards. We have also contributed to the ENMO process.



ENMO 15th Annual Conference 2023

“Key Principles of Ethics Offices in Intergovernmental Organizations”

by Ms Elia Yi Armstrong, former Director of the Ethics Office of the United Nations¹

As I retire after having contributed to establishing the ethics function in 2006 and leading the Ethics Office for the United Nations (UN) Secretariat since 2015, I am struck by the increasing complexities that the UN system and other intergovernmental organizations are facing. Externally, they serve a world that is experiencing daunting challenges such as war and democratic instability, human rights violations, climate-change and related disasters, and conflict-related geopolitical and economic instability and difficulties in providing and distributing necessary assistance to those in need. The fallout of the corona virus disease (COVID-19) pandemic lingers. Internally, these organizations need to strengthen their capacities commensurate with these external challenges for steadfast delivery on their mandates while remaining flexible to respond to unforeseen challenges.

While the work of intergovernmental organizations globally shows the benefits of multilateralism, there remains the hard work of maintaining public trust in the face of scepticism against public organizations, exacerbated by misinformation and disinformation. However, I remain convinced that ethics officers have an indispensable role to play in reminding and advising the leadership and staff of intergovernmental organizations of their ethical obligations and the need to uphold public interest, thus maintaining the credibility of intergovernmental organizations and fostering public trust in them.

Just as the work of intergovernmental organizations has become more difficult, heightened and new ethical considerations face their staff and affiliate personnel. To mention a few, they include self-restraint in public expressions, particularly through the personal use of social media, in order to maintain and demonstrate their independence and impartiality in an increasingly polarized operating environment. In addition, calls by staff for greater engagement with outside interests and their greater focus on social justice have increased their interest and engagement in outside activities. The pandemic brought

¹ The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the view of the United Nations.

the necessity of remote and flexible work arrangements, which may have increased work-life balance but also may have blurred the distinction between work and personal spheres for staff. These potential conflicts-of-interest considerations should be factored in any ongoing implementation of ethical frameworks by ethics officers.

Ethics offices need to be up to speed in delivering their services and making preventive contributions to the transparency and accountability frameworks of their intergovernmental organizations. The hallmarks of effective ethics offices in intergovernmental organizations have been distilled from the vast experience of both the public and private sectors.

Particularly, in the public sector, they include an optimal degree of operational independence to be impartial and unswayable by political and partisan pressures. This independence is marked by concurrent and differentiated reporting lines (e.g. to the governing board, the executive head and any independent oversight committee) as well as by term limits, security of tenure and re-employment restrictions for the chief ethics officer. They include sufficient resourcing for the function, either through a separate budget process, adequate and professional staffing and material and technical resources to get the job done. They also encompass a clear delineation of the ethics function, mostly preventive in nature, which involves the clarification and advice with respect to codes of conduct or other ethical frameworks and awareness-raising of and ethics training on the standards and provisions. In addition, the provision of confidential conflicts-of-interest advice and financial and other interest disclosure programmes for staff and affiliate personnel can prevent wrongdoing, such as fraud or corruption and other misconduct, witting or unwitting, thus safeguarding overall organizational interest. Like other offices, the ethics offices need to demonstrate their value to management and staff through receiving and appropriately responding to feedback, evaluations (e.g. through peer reviews respecting operational independence) and benchmarking.

Internally, a strong and appropriate engagement by the ethics offices with other internal control and oversight functions will assist them in achieving coherent application of ethical standards. Externally, professional engagement with the ethics functions of other intergovernmental organizations through communities of practice such as the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations (ENMO), will allow for the sharing of lessons learned and encourage more innovative collaboration on key challenges. Created in 2010, ENMO brings together senior professionals responsible for the ethics functions in about 50 multilateral intergovernmental organizations. It serves as a forum for members to exchange information and experience for the purpose of broadening their knowledgebase, enhancing their professional capacity and promoting standards of practice and core responsibilities of the ethics function among member organizations.

While noting that the Ethics Officer of the Council of Europe is an active member of ENMO and that this function has a solid basis as manifested in the new Mandate of the Ethics Officer, ENMO aims at further improving such functions on the basis of commonly shared experience and best practice.

The ethics offices of intergovernmental organizations will continue to be at the service of their Organizations (leadership, staff and other stakeholders) in their efforts to successfully deliver on their overall mandates in an increasingly complex world. In doing so, all the workforce and key stakeholders need to be reminded of their obligation to uphold the highest ethical standards of their organizations in discharging the duties entrusted to them by the public. My experience has taught me that the ethics profession is a noble one, which can be fraught with difficulties at times. It can trace its origins to being a trusted, confidential and convincing source of advice on life-and-death matters that faced empresses and chiefs of the past as well as speaking truth to power when self-interest reigned supreme. While individually ethics offices may be small and relatively young, as a community of practice, they are instrumental in helping intergovernmental organizations maintain their values and standards when navigating the choppy waters, not least in times of global instability and change.

PERSPECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While the establishment of new Staff Regulations, Staff Rules and ethics policies is an achievement, these rules need to evolve further. For example, clear post-employment restrictions to avoid conflicts of interest situations when Secretariat members leave their service or retire should be included in the **Staff Rules**. Conflicts of interest situations may arise when former staff members shortly following departure/retirement would provide services to Permanent Representations or, even before departure, if they are nominated for a CoE committee or as a candidate to become a judge of the European Court of Human Rights, to mention a few possible examples. A so-called 'cooling-off period' (e.g. one-two years) after leaving public service is common in member states and could also be a useful tool in the Council of Europe. This could possibly replace the current far-reaching wide ban on contracting retired staff members to act as consultants for the Organisation. Restrictions need to be proportionate to their aims. In this connection, the total ban on recruiting and consider for traineeships close relatives of staff members could be re-assessed, as it appears discriminatory and overly strict, in particular in the light of the existing Staff Rule 110.4 which already excludes close relatives from working in the same entity or line of authority.

As far as the **ethical standards** are concerned, all but one instruments are in place (and work is underway in DGA on the Policy on Diversity). While the new Ethics Framework is legally binding upon all Secretariat members, it is "only" expected that other persons participating in the activities of the Council of Europe (MPs, judges, intergovernmental and independent experts, consultants, etc.) will uphold the values and respect these standards. There is a relevant demand from staff that the ethical standards must apply fully in respect of all categories of persons active in the Council of Europe. Despite the fact that this can be difficult to achieve in practice, it appears as an important goal for the future. The Staff Rules (180) on gifts and other favours have been strengthened. This is good, but I maintain my position that these Rules should be complemented with a clear policy statement in the Code of Conduct against accepting gifts.

The **institutional framework** of the Ethics function developed considerably in 2023 with the new permanent post and mandate of the Ethics Officer. The independence of this function is spelled out in the mandate; however, it needs to be better reflected in the institutional set-up as well. This requires adequate staffing. There is no permanent assistance available on substantial matters within the Office itself, and the Ethics Officer cannot be replaced during leave. Adequate staffing is also required in view of added functions such as the monitoring of annual declarations of interest, which is foreseen as of 2025. It could also be considered to move the gift register from Protocol to the Ethics Office. Moreover, the Ethics Office does not have its own budget; every activity requires agreement from the DGA. So far, this has been possible thanks to a supportive and flexible approach by the Director General of Administration, but is not sustainable.

For the **implementation** of the new ethical standards, the initial awareness measures and training carried out in 2023, need to be complemented with new e-learning material for all Secretariat members as well as tailored training for various departments, such as the one provided to external offices. Moreover, ethics should be further emphasised in the management training. Awareness raising need to go beyond the Secretariat to include officials and members of various mechanisms and committees, experts and consultants. Last but not least, **evaluation** of the system (standards, institutions and awareness) needs further attention in the future.

In view of the foregoing, it is recommended to:

- **ensure** that the ethical standards are applied to all categories of officials and experts in the Council of Europe, to the extent feasible;
- **consider** introducing post-employment restrictions in the Staff Rules, possibly in the form of a cooling-off period regarding activities which are closely related to the Organisation;
- **include** a policy statement against accepting gifts and other advantages in the Code of Conduct (with a reference to the details contained in the Staff Rules);
- **provide** adequate staffing to the Ethics Office;
- **consider** moving the gift register to the Ethics Office;
- **consider** a separate budget line for the Ethics Office;
- **include** pertinent modules on ethics in management trainings;
- **ensure** updated mandatory e-learning on ethics and needs based training to various parts of the Organisation for Secretariat members, and awareness raising for other persons participating in Council of Europe activities;
- **establish** models for general surveys on ethical awareness in the Council of Europe.

UPHOLDING ETHICAL VALUES WITHIN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The core values of those who work for the Council of Europe (the leading European organisation on democracy, protection of human rights and the rule of law) are **professionalism, integrity** and **respect**, as identified by the Secretariat members themselves. These values - our **ethos** – represent the culture we strive for and help us define what is important in our daily work for the Organisation as well as what is expected from Secretariat members and other persons participating in Council of Europe activities. These values are defined and further developed in the **Code of Conduct** under the titles “independence”, “trustworthiness”, “responsibility”, “dignity”, “diversity” and “discretion” and in the other policy instruments that form part of the **Ethics Framework**.



The **Ethics Officer** is the focal point for ethics-related questions and standards in the Council of Europe. This independent advisory and preventive function aims at contributing to the Organisation’s goal to adhere to the highest ethical standards and mitigate risks of damage to the functioning and reputation of the Council of Europe.

Information disclosed to the Ethics Officer will be handled confidentially. If you have an ethics-related question, please send an e-mail to ethics@coe.int. More information about the Ethics Officer is available at www.coe.int/en/web/ethics/.