



**Annual Report of the Director General**  
on  
**Administration of Justice for 2024**

**July 2025**

## **Introduction**

As an international organization, WIPO is not subject to the jurisdiction of national courts. To ensure that legal recourse is nevertheless available to staff members in relation to employment matters, WIPO, like other international organizations, has in place an internal justice system to address and resolve staff matters and conflicts in the workplace. Pursuant to that system, current and former staff members are provided with a formal avenue to bring cases when they believe that they have an employment-related grievance, which includes the right to appeal any decision taken by the Administration that adversely and individually affects them.<sup>1</sup> A robust internal justice system is in the interest of all stakeholders (staff and management alike), and forms part of the Organization's overall accountability and governance framework. Finally, a fully functioning internal justice system that enables the resolution of conflict promotes a culture of integrity, respect and responsibility, and fosters trust in leadership. It can also boost staff morale and well-being, which in turn can lead to higher productivity and increased staff engagement.

This annual report of the Director General for 2024 provides detailed information, including data on the gender and category of staff who made use of the formal justice system, the nature of these cases, their outcomes, as well as the rate of conversion of legal challenges to the next level within that system.<sup>2</sup>

## **Overview of the WIPO administration of justice system**

The types of staff matters that are dealt with as part of WIPO's formal system of justice are as follows (see also Figure 1 below for a visual representation):

- (a) Disciplinary cases concerning misconduct pursuant to Chapter X of the Staff Regulations and Rules.<sup>3</sup>
- (b) Complaints pursuant to Staff Rule 11.4.1 concerning workplace-related conflicts and grievances ("grievance complaints").<sup>4</sup>
- (c) Rebuttals of performance appraisals pursuant to Staff Rule 11.4.2 ("performance rebuttals").<sup>5</sup>
- (d) Requests for review of administrative decisions pursuant to Staff Rule 11.4.3 (other than decisions taken in relation to disciplinary proceedings, grievance complaints and performance rebuttals - see (a) to (c) above).<sup>6</sup>
- (e) Internal appeals to the WIPO Appeal Board pursuant to Staff Regulation 11.5 against decisions taken in relation to (a) to (d) above.

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<sup>1</sup> While staff members have the right to file a legal challenge, they are strongly encouraged to resolve conflict informally, by seeking the assistance of the Office of the Ombudsperson, the Human Resources Management Department, or a higher-level supervisor.

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this report, references to "staff members" may include former staff members.

<sup>3</sup> See section HRM/DIS/2 of the HR Manual.

<sup>4</sup> See section HRM/WCG/1 of the HR Manual.

<sup>5</sup> See section HRM/REB/1 of the HR Manual.

<sup>6</sup> See section HRM/RFR/1 of the HR Manual.

- (f) Appeals to the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization (“ILOAT”), pursuant to Staff Regulation 11.6, in accordance with the conditions set forth in the Statute of the ILOAT.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 1 – Components of the formal system of justice

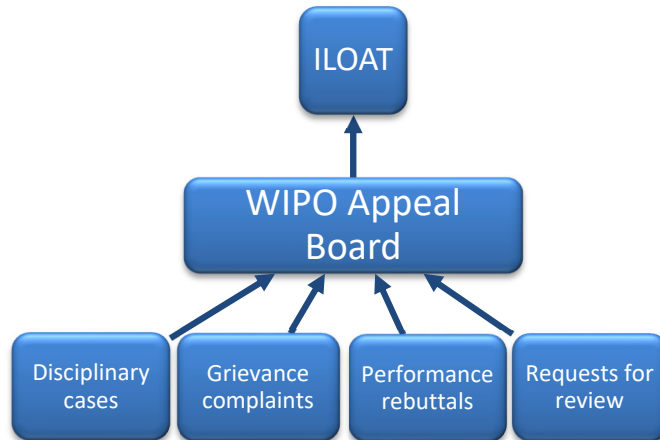


Figure 1 shows that the first level of recourse (that is, the pre-WIPO Appeal Board stage) consists of four different subject matters. Of these, disciplinary matters are the only type of case that is not initiated by a staff member. In all four types of cases, staff members have the possibility of challenging the decisions rendered by filing an appeal before the WIPO Appeal Board.

The WIPO Appeal Board is an independent body of peers, with an external Chair and Deputy Chair, whose role is to advise the Director General whenever an appeal is filed by a staff member against a decision on a disciplinary case, a grievance complaint, a performance rebuttal, or a request for review. Following the conclusion of the appeal process, the WIPO Appeal Board issues a report with conclusions and recommendations, which is then transmitted to the Director General. The opinions and recommendations of the WIPO Appeal Board are advisory in character, and the Director General gives them full consideration before taking a final decision in the matter. If he departs from the recommendations of the WIPO Appeal Board, his decision must indicate the reasons for any such departure. The Director General’s final decision may then be challenged by the staff member before the ILOAT, by filing a complaint. As the final arbiter in an employment-related dispute, the ILOAT sits at the apex of WIPO’s justice system “pyramid”. The ILOAT is an external judicial body competent to hear complaints filed by staff members working in different organizations that have, like WIPO, submitted to its jurisdiction. Unlike the recommendations of the WIPO Appeal Board, the judgments of the ILOAT are “final” and “binding”. This means that there is no further appeal possible, and that the Organization is obliged to execute the judgment as rendered.

<sup>7</sup> The Statute of the ILOAT, as well as its Rules, are accessible on-line from the ILOAT’s website: [www.ilo.org/tribunal](http://www.ilo.org/tribunal)

A more detailed description of WIPO’s formal conflict resolution system is provided on the intranet pages of the Office of the Legal Counsel (OLC), which were re-launched in 2024. If staff members have not yet done so, they are strongly encouraged to take some time to peruse the information available to them on OLC’s site.

### **Breakdown of number of cases**

During the reporting year of 2024, a total of 19 cases were opened and a total of 26 cases were closed (or withdrawn). Figure 2 below provides a breakdown of these total numbers by reference to the six categories of cases, as outlined in the Overview above.

Figure 2 – Number of opened and closed cases in 2024

| Year 2024     | Disciplinary cases | Grievance Complaints <sup>8</sup> | Performance Rebuttals | Requests for review | WIPO Appeal Board | ILOAT | Total     |
|---------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------|-----------|
| <i>Open</i>   | 3                  | 8 <sup>9</sup>                    | 0                     | 4                   | 3                 | 1     | <b>19</b> |
| <i>Closed</i> | 4                  | 6                                 | 0                     | 5                   | 6 <sup>10</sup>   | 5     | <b>26</b> |

By way of clarification, a single case that reaches the ILOAT would have been recorded multiple times during the lifecycle of that case, across the same, or different, reporting years.

Furthermore, a case filed before the WIPO Appeal Board is not completed until a decision has been taken with respect to the Board’s recommendations. In practical terms, this means that a case in relation to which recommendations were issued towards the end of 2024 will not appear as “closed” in the statistics above for the reporting year of 2025, unless a decision was also taken in 2024.

### **Breakdown of categories of cases**

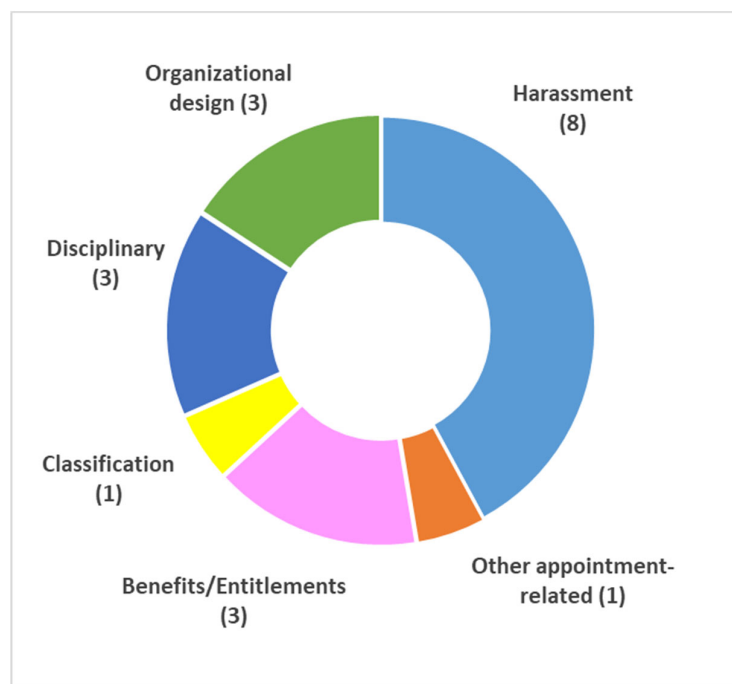
The nature of the cases opened in 2024 may be categorized as illustrated in Figure 3 below: (a) classification; (b) benefits/entitlements; (c) organizational design; (d) harassment; (e) disciplinary matters; and (g) other appointment-related matters.

<sup>8</sup> These figures include grievance complaints filed by all members of personnel, and not only staff members. Since August 22, 2019, and in line with WIPO’s zero-tolerance policy for any form of discrimination or harassment, all personnel, irrespective of their contractual status, have access to the procedure for the administrative resolution of their grievances. When the data in this report includes individuals who are not staff members, the broader term “personnel” is used.

<sup>9</sup> Of these eight complaints, one was filed anonymously by a group of individuals against one staff member, and two were filed by the same individual against: (i) a staff member; and (ii) a group of staff members. It is recalled that, since January 1, 2022, the Internal Oversight Division (IOD) is the intake office for workplace-related conflict and grievance complaints. Upon completion of the investigative process in relation to a complaint, the Director of IOD transmits a report to the Director General containing the findings and conclusions of that process. For the purposes of this annual exercise, a grievance complaint is considered “open” when the Director General receives the investigation report from IOD.

<sup>10</sup> Two appeals were submitted by multiple staff members. The first appeal was submitted by nine staff members, and the second by four staff members.

Figure 3 – Nature of cases



### **Demographics of users of WIPO’s administration of justice system**

To provide more of an in-depth picture of the users of the formal system of justice, data is broken down by both gender and category of personnel. For the year 2024, a total of 13 members of personnel used the system (“individual users”),<sup>11</sup> while a group of anonymous individuals also submitted a case.

#### *Gender*

In respect of the 13 individual users in 2024, eight were female (62%), and five (38%) were male.

#### *Category*

Of the 13 individual users in 2024, four were from the General Service category (31%), and nine (69%) were from the Professional and higher categories.

### **Outcome of cases**

Of the 26 cases that were closed in 2024, it should be recalled that these are not necessarily the same as those that were opened during that same reporting year.

<sup>11</sup> As the focus of this section is on the users of the system (as opposed to the number of cases they filed), an individual who filed multiple legal challenges in 2024 is only counted once.

### *Disciplinary cases*

In respect of three of the four disciplinary cases, the Director General decided to dismiss the staff members concerned, following the completion of disciplinary proceedings. In the fourth disciplinary case, the Director General decided to relegate the staff member concerned to a lower step within the grade with a delayed advancement to the next salary step for a period of two years. The staff member is also ineligible for a step increase during the period. During the disciplinary proceedings in all four cases, the staff members concerned were given the opportunity to present their defense to the charges of misconduct laid.

One of the four decisions of the Director General was challenged before the WIPO Appeal Board.

### *Grievance complaints*

Of the six grievance complaints closed in 2024, one was resolved informally, and one was withdrawn. In relation to the four remaining complaints, the Director General decided to dismiss three of them following investigative findings by IOD that the allegations of harassment were not established on the evidence. In the final case, in the exercise of its independent mandate, and pursuant to its investigative framework, IOD determined that there was a more appropriate means of intervention available, and instead referred the matter to HRMD for resolution from a managerial perspective. In those circumstances, the Director General considered the matter closed from an investigative angle. None of the complainants challenged the decision of the Director General before the WIPO Appeal Board.

### *Requests for review*

In respect of the five requests for review closed in 2024, two contested decisions were upheld by the Director General, two requests for review were deemed irreceivable, and the final request was withdrawn by the staff member following a mutually negotiated outcome. Two of the four decisions taken by the Director General were challenged before the WIPO Appeal Board.

### *Appeals before the WIPO Appeal Board*

Six appeals were closed in 2024, of which two were withdrawn by the staff member concerned before the issuance of the report by the WIPO Appeal Board and four were closed *via* a decision of the Director General. In one case, the WIPO Appeal Board recommended a summary dismissal of the appeal as it was considered clearly irreceivable.<sup>12</sup> In two appeals, the WIPO Appeal Board recommended their dismissal in their entirety on the substance. In the last appeal, the Board recommended an award of moral damages in relation to one aspect of the case, while dismissing all other claims contained therein. In all four cases, the Director General followed the recommendations of the Board.

In respect of the appeals that were closed *via* a decision of the Director General in 2024, two cases were not taken further, while the remaining two were converted into complaints before the ILOAT.

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<sup>12</sup> An appeal may be summarily dismissed if it is clearly irreceivable or devoid of merit, without the need for the filing of a reply by the Director General (see Staff Rule 11.5.3(c) and (d)).

### *Complaints before the ILOAT*

Turning to the five cases disposed of by the ILOAT in 2024, it found in favor of one staff member. In the four other cases, the ILOAT dismissed one case on irreceivability grounds, one case for lack of a cause of action, and two cases on the substance.

### **Closing remarks**

In contrast to this annual report, which provides a general overview of the formal administration of justice system, the report of the WIPO Appeal Board offers a more detailed look at the types of appeals submitted before it by staff over the previous year. The WIPO Appeal Board report will be made available to staff members in due course.

In addition, more information regarding disciplinary cases is provided in Information Circular No. 16/2025 entitled “Disciplinary and administrative measures applied in WIPO during the period January-December 2024”.

In closing, the Director General wishes to reassure staff of his continued commitment to an effective internal justice system, which plays an essential role in securing a respectful and harmonious workplace. To this end, the system of administration of justice at WIPO is under regular review as part of a consultative process with relevant stakeholders, to ensure that it continues to reflect a coherent approach, the evolving jurisprudence of the ILOAT and best practices.

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