

Annual report Confidential Counsellors 2025

Network of Confidential Counsellors for Unwanted
Behaviour and Integrity

Erasmus University Rotterdam
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Based on: aggregated data provided by all 18 trusted persons of the network

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English translation

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Executive summary

In 2025, 184 unique employees and students contacted a confidential advisor from Erasmus University Rotterdam, which is an increase of more than 60% compared to 2024 (113 people). In total, considerably more conversations took place: an average of 2 to 3 per reporter, with some of the cases requiring more intensive guidance.

Who contacted?

Of the 184 unique detectors, 140 were employees and 44 were students. In 19 cases, the situation resulted in a sick report (14 employees, 5 students); in 10 cases, the reporter left EUR (9 employees, 1 student). It concerns 29 separate people.

What was going on?

The largest category concerned cooperation and interpersonal problems (118 contacts), followed by labour conflicts (65) and bullying (41). In more than eight out of ten cases in labour disputes and bullying, the manager was the accused party, a consistent pattern that is in line with national findings. Discrimination (30 contacts) and sexually transgressive behaviour (9, almost exclusively students) also occurred.

Particular attention should be paid to

PhD candidates (42 unique contacts): structurally vulnerable due to strong dependence on the supervisor, mutual competitive pressure and limited room for manoeuvre. International staff and students are strongly represented in discrimination reports; Confidential counsellors suspect additional barriers to finding their way to support.

Increasing complexity

Confidential counsellors notice, for example during peer review, that the cases in 2025 felt more complex on average than in previous years. People often only find their way to the confidential adviser when a situation has already escalated considerably. This is a point of attention, even though at the same time it may indicate a lower threshold for contact. The scope for aftercare, intervention and further training was structurally too limited in the current decentralized set-up. This underlines the urgency of further development into a more professional, more centrally organised network, on which the Executive Board made a decision in March 2026.

Points of attention

The network identifies three priorities: energetically realising the further development to the new structure, securing the independent positioning of the network in the new governance, and continuing the registration infrastructure. Management teams from services and faculties are invited to discuss the findings about managers and to involve them in leadership development.

1. Foreword

Those who take the step to contact a confidential adviser rarely do so lightly. Many people turn to a confidential adviser when they are already facing a difficult situation: a boundary has been crossed, or a problem has persisted for too long. The fact that people still take that step requires courage and trust.

In 2025, 184 staff members and students placed that trust in one of the confidential advisers of Erasmus University Rotterdam. This is a significant increase compared with 2024, when 113 individuals contacted the network. More people found their way to the network, a development that reflects the growing attention to social safety within the university.

2025 was also a year of change for the Network of Confidential Counsellors. Network Coordinator and project lead (kwartiermaker) Mariëlle van Leeuwen used the year to lay the foundation for a stronger and more professional network. She engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, administrators and directors, gathered feedback, and ultimately submitted a proposal to the Executive Board in December 2025 regarding the future organisation of the network. The new structure is expected to be implemented in the first quarter of 2027.

At the same time, the network continued its regular activities. Confidential advisers provided support and guidance to staff members and students, assisted individuals in navigating complex situations, participated in peer consultation, and increased their visibility across the university through activities such as the Eureka week and the screening of Beyond Silence.

This report provides insight into who contacted the network in 2025, the issues raised, and the trends observed by the confidential advisers. All data have been anonymised and aggregated. No information can be traced back to individual persons or cases.

Terminology: In this report, the terms Confidential Counsellor and Confidential Adviser are used interchangeably and refer to the same role. Confidential Counsellor is used in the title as a widely recognised English translation of the Dutch term *vertrouwenspersoon*, while Confidential Adviser is used throughout the report to reflect the advisory and supportive nature of the role.

On behalf of the Network of Confidential Counsellors for Undesirable Behaviour & Integrity
Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2026

2. The Network of Confidential Counsellors

2.1 History and development

Until 2019, EUR had two central confidential counsellors (part-time) for the entire university. As of 2019, the Executive Board expanded this with a network of decentralised confidential advisers associated with faculties and services. At the time, this was about 20 people, of which 15 for employees and 5 for students. The aim included better information sharing, professionalisation, policy development and the possibility for staff and students to contact a confidential adviser from another faculty or service.

That choice turned out to be a positive development. The average number of contacts rose from 41 contacts per year in the years before 2019 to an average of 112 contacts per year in the period 2019–2024. In 2025, that number increased further to 184 contacts. Social safety has broad administrative and organisational attention within the EUR; The network of confidential counsellors reflects that attention.

At the same time, it became clear that the decentralized set-up, with a large number of confidential counsellors who fulfil the role in addition to their regular position for 1 to 2 hours a week, had its limits. Confidential counsellors received little structured guidance or joint frameworks to fall back on, as a result of which uniform working methods, registration and mutual cooperation sometimes did not get off the ground sufficiently.

In 2024, the policy document Inventory & Advice on Social Safety (collaboration between HR, E&S and the IDEA Center) concluded that the network was in need of further development. As of January 2025, a quartermaster has therefore been appointed with the task of developing a future-proof plan. After consultation with various stakeholders and the representative advisory bodies, a proposal was submitted to the Executive Board in December 2025, followed by a decision in March 2026.

Year	Development
2019	The Executive Board is expanding the network with 20 decentralised confidential advisers in addition to the existing 2 central confidential advisers.
2025	The network will still have 24 confidential counsellors at the beginning of 2025. A project lead (kwartiermaker) is appointed with the assignment to write a proposal for further development. Hiring stop for new confidential counsellors; network is starting to shrink. Proposal submitted to the Executive Board in December.
2026	The Executive Board will make a decision on the further development of the network in March 2026. Transition period: 10 confidential advisers active, supplemented by 2 external confidential advisers on call. Preparation for new structure.
2027 (expected)	Phase-out of decentralized network completed (Q1). Installation of 2 internal confidential advisers (together 1.6 FTE), supplemented by 1 or 2 external confidential advisers on call.
2028 (expected)	Possible expansion of the capacity of internal confidential advisers by 0.8 FTE.

The proposal provides for evaluation after the first year of the new structure. Based on this, it will be decided in Q3 2027 whether expansion to a third internal confidential adviser is desirable and necessary as of 2028.

2.2 Composition in 2025

At the end of 2025, the network consisted of 18 confidential counsellors. Due to a hiring freeze that took effect at the beginning of 2025, the network shrank over the course of the year. All of them combined their role as confidential advisers with a regular appointment within the university, for an average of 1 to 2 hours per week.

Each faculty and some services had one or more confidential advisers. Although confidential counsellors were appointed within a specific faculty or service, they were in principle available to the entire university community. Those who prefer not to end up with a confidential adviser from their own faculty or service could therefore choose someone else. This applied to both students and staff.

Employees of EUR Holding, affiliated BVs and Erasmus MC have access to their own confidential advisors outside this network and their cases are not included in the figures in this report. If they do report to one of the EUR confidential advisers, they will not be refused and will be included in this report. Staff and students who have contacted a Confidential Adviser for Research Integrity with regard to violations of academic integrity are also not included in this annual report. These confidential advisors are not currently part of the network. An up-to-date overview of the Confidential Advisers for Undesirable Behaviour and Integrity is available on the EUR website.

2.3 Registration

By 2025, the network's registration categories will be aligned with those of Safe@EUR and the ombudsperson, with the aim of enabling comparison. The (aggregated) registration was done via Excel and Teams Forms. The quality of the data partly depends on the care with which individual confidential advisors have completed the forms.

In 2026, the registration will be further developed. The ambition is to work with a uniform digital system by 2027, in line with the system used by Safe@EUR and the ombudsperson.

2.4 Cooperation within the help and reporting system

The network of confidential counsellors works closely with other actors within EUR's care structure. Safe@EUR is the central reporting point for anyone who has to deal with undesirable or worrying behaviour. Where appropriate, Safe@EUR will make a warm transfer to the confidential counsellors for personal support and guidance. The ombudsperson comes into the picture when the informal process is not (or no longer) sufficient, or when an independent investigation is required.

In the case of reports with a high safety risk, it can be scaled up via Safe@EUR to the Worrying Behaviour Expertise Team, which acts as a second-line advice line for officials involved in complex or high-risk situations. Where necessary, confidential counsellors refer the reporter to HR, company social work, OpenUp, or legal guidance. For students, study advisors, student counsellors and student psychologists form additional, often low-threshold support channels within the university.

During the Eurekaweek in 2025, confidential counsellors were available at all times, including at night. Experience showed that this was hardly used. For 2026, a more targeted deployment has therefore been chosen: confidential counsellors can be reached during regular hours, with a clear delineation of what they are and are not for. The collaboration with the Eurekaweek organisation on appropriate support during the official programme is currently being further developed.

3. The role of the confidential adviser

The confidential adviser offers a safe, confidential and accessible place to staff and students who have to deal with undesirable behaviour or integrity issues. The role is based on three core tasks, which together encompass the breadth of work.

1. Reception and guidance

This is the most visible task. The confidential adviser offers a listening ear, helps the reporter clarify the situation and discusses possible follow-up steps. From refraining from further action to filing a formal complaint. The reporter is always in control. Where desired, the confidential adviser also actively guides the reporter, for example by going along (for mental support) to a meeting with the manager, a mediation process, or the hearing of a complaints committee. Where necessary, referrals are made to other support within or outside the EUR.

2. Educate, inform and inspire

In addition to case-oriented support, the confidential adviser fulfils a preventive role. This includes informing staff and students about undesirable behaviour and the role of the confidential advisor, participating in awareness sessions and collaborating with managers, HR, the IDEA Center, E&S, the Student Wellbeing Programme and other parties. In 2025, the network was visibly present during EurekaWeek and at the Beyond Silence film screening on sexually transgressive behaviour. In 2025, less time was available for this component than necessary due to the limited capacity of the network.

3. Solicited and unsolicited advice

Based on signals from practice, the confidential adviser contributes to the improvement of social safety within the organisation. This can involve anonymised trends and patterns that are fed back to the board or management, or concrete recommendations for improving the working environment. The confidential adviser thus acts as the 'thermometer' of the organisation. This signalling and advisory role requires sufficient time and an independent position; In the current decentralized set-up, there was structurally too little room for this.

For example, in 2025, a meeting took place within one faculty between the MT, the HR Business Partner and their confidential advisors about the signal that they regularly received labor conflict-related cases that are not part of the confidential advisor's core tasks. This is just one example of the way in which confidential advisors fulfill their signaling role.

The confidential adviser is bound by strict confidentiality. Information about individual cases is never shared with third parties, unless the reporter gives explicit permission for this. This also applies to managers, HR and the board.

4. Figures and registration 2025

4.1 Methodological justification

The figures in this chapter are based on the registrations submitted by the confidential advisors for the year 2025. The following caveats apply to the interpretation:

In this report, the term 'contact' is used for any conversation that a staff member or student has had with a confidential advisor, regardless of the nature or duration of that conversation. One reporter may have had several conversations; The 184 contacts concern unique people, not the total number of conversations. The person who contacts is referred to as a 'reporter'; This is the person whose situation the conversation is about, not necessarily the person who has filed or is considering filing a formal complaint. The term "report" is used in this report only for formal complaints or reports to a complaints committee, Safe@EUR or similar bodies.

- The data only reflects who has crossed the threshold to a confidential advisor; An unknown number of situations never reach the network. Employees also turn to HR, prevention officers, Safe@EUR, the ombudsperson and other colleagues. For students, study advisors, student counsellors and student psychologists are a logical choice; These contacts are not included in this report. See the overarching Social Annual Report 2025, drawn up by E&S and HR.
- The completeness of the registration forms differed per confidential advisor. In a significant proportion of the registrations, fields have been filled in with 'I don't know' or 'I'd rather not say', or they have been left empty. This limits the depth of the analyses, especially for data on the background of the reporter and the nature of the situation. More consistent and complete completion of the registrations is an explicit point of attention for 2026.
- The total figures are based on 184 unique reporters, only EUR employees and students.
- Data on the accused party is less complete and reliable than data on the reporter; conclusions about this are deliberately avoided.
- Nothing in this report can be traced back to individuals or cases. All data is presented in an aggregated and anonymized form.

4.2 Total number of contacts

In 2025, 184 people had contact with a confidential advisor from EUR: 140 employees and 44 students. This is an increase of more than 60% compared to 2024, when there were 113 contacts. On average, 2 to 3 conversations took place per reporter; Some of the cases required more intensive guidance over a longer period of time. In 19 cases, the situation resulted in the reporter reporting sick (14 employees, 5 students); in 10 cases, the reporter left EUR (9 employees, 1 student). It concerns 29 separate people; There is no overlap between the two groups.

4.3 Overview by theme

The table below gives an overview of the themes that were discussed. One case can include several themes; As a result, the numbers do not add up to the total number of reporters.

Theme	Students	Employees
Cooperation and interpersonal problems without a clear violation of standards	10	108
Working conditions (e.g. labour dispute, work pressure)	1	64
Bullying	4	37
Discrimination	12	18
Scientific integrity	3	18
Violence and aggression	2	10
Worrisome behavior	3	8
Sexually transgressive behaviour	7	2
Undesirable behaviour in response to social events	0	5
Administrative integrity	0	6
Stalking	1	0
Mental load	1	1
Other: questions about procedures / position of confidential adviser	0	7
Totally unique detectors	44	140

The largest category is cooperation and interpersonal problems without a clear violation of norms and includes situations in which there is conflict or tension, but where it is not yet clear whether a formal norm has been violated. In any case, it concerns 108 employees and 10 students. Many reporters come to a confidential adviser in this exploratory phase: to understand what is happening to them and what steps may be possible.

5. Trends and observations

The figures in the previous chapter give a picture of who reported and about what. In this chapter, we look at what lies behind these figures: what patterns are emerging, which groups deserve special attention and what does the case history say about social safety at EUR in 2025? The observations are descriptive in nature; No causal statements, no statements about individual situations.

5.1 More people found their way

The increase from 113 to 184 contacts is the most striking development of 2025. Confidential counsellors recognise this as a positive signal: more people know how to find the network and the threshold seems to have become lower. Visibility on campus through EurekaWeek, the film screening of *Beyond Silence*, the series of Active Bystander Training for employees and other activities probably contribute to this. At the same time, caution is advised: an increase in the number of reports can also indicate an increase in the underlying problem, which cannot be determined on the basis of the available data. What is clear: the questions that people bring with them have not become easier. Situations have often escalated before someone knocks on the door of a confidential advisor.

5.2 Power dynamics as a common thread

A recurring pattern in the 2025 case histories is the role of power differential and intimidation. Together, these are the most frequently mentioned subcategories within transgressive behaviour (based on the VP registration 2025). Of the 156 contacts in which the relationship between the reporter and the accused was registered, almost half concerned a hierarchical dependence on the accused. This can be a manager, a supervisor, a teacher or study counselor. Power differentials therefore play a recognizable role in the casuistry. In practice, intimidation often occurs in combination with power imbalances: those who depend on someone else for assessment, (study) progress or performance quickly experience criticism, pressure or transgressive behaviour from that person as intimidating.

5.3 Labour disputes: often around expectations and abuse of power

Working conditions and labour conflicts form the second largest category with 64 employees and 1 student. Not all of these reports concern transgressive behaviour: 23 of the 64 (36%) only concerned a labour dispute, for example disagreement about a decision or the performance of a job, without transgressive behaviour being reported. This did play a role in the other 41.

In the cases in which it was known who the defendant was (45 out of 64; in 19 cases this was not recorded), in more than eight out of ten cases this concerned the manager. The most frequently mentioned underlying themes are unclear mutual expectations between employee and manager, and experienced abuse of power.

5.4 Bullying: often in combination with abuse of power

Bullying and exclusion were reported in 41 cases (37 employees, 4 students). In 34 of the 41 it was known who the defendant was (in 7 it was not); Of these, more than eight out of ten cases concerned the reporter's manager. In these cases, bullying often went hand in hand with abuse of power and intimidation.

5.5 Scientific integrity and behaviour of concern

Academic integrity (18 employees, 3 students) almost exclusively concerned PhD students and academic staff, which is obvious given the nature of this theme. It is in line with the vulnerable position of PhD candidates that is also described in 5.8. The confidential adviser for Scientific Integrity has also received reports; These are explained in a separate report.

Worrisome behaviour (8 employees, 3 students) differs in nature from the other categories. Reporters reported situations of persistent unwanted contact, threats of violence, stalking or other forms of serious behaviour; Even outside the immediate work environment. These cases require a different approach than regular conflict mediation, because the safety of those involved is paramount and immediate upscaling is sometimes necessary. Where necessary, they will be scaled up to the Worrying Behaviour Expertise Team (see 2.4).

5.6 Reports of discrimination

Of the 184 contacts, at least 30 related to discrimination: 18 employees and 12 students. In several cases, there was more than one ground for discrimination, so the figures below have not been added together.

Ground of discrimination	Students	Employees
Origin / ethnicity / racism	7	8
Nationality	7	8
Gender	4	6
Disability or chronic condition	2	5
Age	1	4
Employment relationship / contract form	0	4
Religion or philosophy of life	2	3
Sexual orientation	2	3
Pregnancy discrimination	0	2
Political affinity	0	1
* Multiple grounds possible per case		

Origin/ethnicity and nationality are the most frequently mentioned grounds, both among students and staff. Pregnancy discrimination, discrimination on the basis of sex and on the basis of a disability or chronic condition also occurred.

In response to the report of the national Taskforce on Combating Antisemitism (February 2026), confidential counsellors will receive training in the autumn of 2026 aimed at recognising and dealing with reports of discrimination, including antisemitism. This is being developed in collaboration between HR, the IDEA Center and the coordinator of confidential counsellors.

5.7 Sexually transgressive behaviour

Sexually transgressive behaviour and sexual harassment were reported in 9 cases, almost exclusively by students. Given the small number and sensitivity of this theme, no further breakdown is deliberately given here, in order to avoid traceability to individual cases. The fact that this almost exclusively concerns students is in line with the broader attention to sexually transgressive behaviour among students, a theme that is also receiving increasing attention nationally.

5.8 PhD candidates: vulnerable due to structure

In 2025, 42 of the 184 contacts concerned a PhD student. PhD candidates are contractually regarded as employees at EUR, but their position differs from other (young) academic staff in a

number of crucial respects. While postdocs and other starting scientists are also dependent on seniors, the dependence on PhD candidates is sharper: they are highly dependent on their supervisor or supervisor for the substantive assessment of their work, their funding and their future prospects. This is due to a context of strong mutual competition, a limited number of transfer places and an associated urge to prove that raises the threshold for discussing problems.

The case histories show that it is precisely this counselling relationship that is a prominent theme: perceived abuse of power, uncertainty about the progress of the PhD programme and limited opportunities to discuss the situation without risking one's own position. When the relationship with the supervisor is disrupted, it has direct consequences for the work, funding and future of the PhD candidate. This makes early detection and easy access to support for this group of particular importance.

At the end of 2025, a budget was allocated from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Subsidy Scheme for Social Safety in Scientific and Higher Education for the development of a communication process (with regard to the support structure) specifically aimed at the target groups of PhD candidates and managers; This process will start in 2026 and continue in 2027.

5.9 International staff and students

International staff and students are strongly represented in the case studies. Of the 30 discrimination reports, nationality and origin/ethnicity are the most frequently mentioned grounds, each with 15 reports together, divided between students and staff. Whether this is proportional to the share of internationals within the EUR community cannot be determined on the basis of the available data.

Confidential advisors suspect that international staff and students may experience additional barriers when seeking support, such as unfamiliarity with Dutch procedures and institutions, language barriers, intercultural challenges and a sometimes more limited network within the university. This is a signal from practice, not a measured data. Better visibility of the network in English, and through channels that reach international target groups, therefore remains a point of attention.

5.10 Students: own patterns, own thresholds

Of the 184 reporters, 44 were students. Compared to employees, their share of discriminatory and sexually transgressive behaviour is relatively larger: discrimination concerned 12 students compared to 18 employees, while the total number of student contacts is more than three times lower. Sexually transgressive behaviour was reported by 7 students, compared to 2 employees. Whether these cases also have a greater impact cannot be determined on the basis of the registration. However, confidential counsellors do see that discrimination is often normalised by those it happens to, which means that students who do report may represent the situations with the greatest impact.

Students reach the confidential adviser less naturally than staff and that cannot only be explained by underreporting. Students have a relatively rich network of low-threshold support: for many, the study advisor is the first and most trusted point of contact, supplemented by student counsellors, student psychologists, mentors and Safe@EUR. As a result, the confidential adviser is therefore more often a later step for students when previous support turned out not to be appropriate or the situation has already escalated further.

5.11 Increasing complexity

Confidential counsellors notice, for example during intervention, that the cases in 2025 were experienced as more complex on average than in previous years. This does not necessarily mean that more complicated situations arose on campus; It can also indicate that more people know how to find their way to the confidential adviser, precisely when a situation has already escalated further.

The increasing complexity puts pressure on confidential counsellors who fulfil the role in addition to their regular position for 1 to 2 hours a week. The room for good aftercare, intervision and further training is limited. It is one of the driving forces behind the proposal for a more professional structure.

"We do not receive appropriate compensation for the work we do, while the work is on top of our regular work."

"It doesn't feel like a network. We don't know each other well, some are difficult to reach; There are too many people with small appointments."

Statements by confidential counsellors, collected by the quartermaster during individual interviews in 2025.

These bottlenecks do not detract from the commitment and commitment with which confidential advisors have fulfilled their role in 2025. Despite limited time and resources, they remained available to people in sometimes difficult and long-lasting situations, and invested in mutual coordination through intervision. The increasing complexity of the case histories mainly underlines why a more professional structure is needed to be able to continue to do that work well.

6. Points of attention

This chapter describes patterns that the network of confidential counsellors identifies from the practice of 2025. It is addressed to the Executive Board, the management teams of services and faculties, and the network itself. It is not intended as exhaustive advice, but as a contribution to the conversation about social safety and the further development of the network, based on the case histories and observations of 2025.

6.1 Continuity and positioning

- Continue the further development of the network energetically. The preparation for phase 1 (two internal confidential counsellors by 2027) deserves priority and structural funding. The current set-up is no longer sufficient for the size and complexity of the cases.
- In March 2026, the Executive Board agreed to structurally embed the costs in the university budget, which guarantees the continuity of the network.
- Strengthen the independent position of the network. The credibility of confidential counsellors stands or falls with their independence from management and board. In the new structure, in which the network is housed under HR, the safeguarding of that independence is not yet explicitly arranged. This deserves explicit attention in the further design and governance of the network.
- Monitor the capacity of the network structurally. The further development towards a more professional structure requires periodic evaluation: is the capacity of two internal confidential advisers sufficient for the demand? The first evaluation is scheduled for 2027, but interim monitoring is also desirable.

6.2 Towards management teams of services and faculties

- The findings in this report are particularly relevant for the management teams of services and faculties. The pattern of managers as defendants, in both labour disputes and bullying cases in more than eight out of ten cases where this was known, requires focused attention at this level. The network of confidential counsellors is happy to think along with you about the translation into practice, and recommends that this report be discussed within management teams.
- Pay specific attention to PhD students. This group is structurally more vulnerable and reaches the confidential adviser less naturally. Managers and supervisors play a crucial role in early identification.
- Make social safety a topic of discussion in teams. A culture in which behaviour is negotiable starts with the manager. Confidential counsellors can play an advisory and supporting role in this.

6.3 What the Network Intends to Provide

- Improve visibility and accessibility, also for international target groups. Multilingual communication and attendance at student-oriented moments, such as the onboarding of new students and staff, the Eureka week and coordination with the student guidance meeting, are valuable in this regard.
- Ensure the continuity of the registration infrastructure. A digital registration system in line with Safe@EUR and the ombudsperson is under development. Uniform and complete

registration is a prerequisite for good reporting and policy development; The current variation in completion quality is a point of attention.

- Be realistic about the scope of the role. Confidential counsellors cannot take on all tasks in the field of social safety. Prevention, policy advice, case management and coordination each require their own expertise and time. Clear delineation of the role, in conjunction with other actors within the care structure, prevents overload and increases the quality of what the network offers.
- Guarantee a structural consultation moment with Safe@EUR and the ombudsperson, for example by linking up with existing quarterly consultations or scheduling a joint coordination moment. The alignment of registration categories in 2025 is a good first step; A fixed consultation rhythm ensures lasting coherence in the implementation, signalling and joint reporting.
- Involve the user perspective in the further development. So far, there has been no structural evaluation of how reporters, defendants and managers experience contact with a confidential advisor. A simple evaluation, for example after completing a case, can provide valuable input for the further professionalization of the network.
- Discrimination will receive extra attention from the upcoming training. The reason for this is the report by the national Taskforce Antisemitism Prevention (February 2026), which calls on universities to take targeted action. The training, developed in collaboration between HR, the IDEA Center and the coordinator of confidential counsellors, focuses on recognising and dealing with discrimination in a broad sense, including antisemitism. A further elaboration of points for attention in this area, partly based on the experiences from the training, will follow in the annual report for 2026.
- Supplement target group analyses more systematically in 2026. This report highlights a number of target groups and patterns based on what the registration showed best, such as PhD students, international staff and students. A more exhaustive target group analysis, for example including the relationship between PhD candidates and their supervisor, support versus academic staff, and the collaboration with student associations, is foreseen for the 2026 annual report.

7. Looking ahead

2026 will be marked by the transition from a decentralized network to a central team. The decentralised network of confidential advisers will be gradually phased out; By the end of 2026, 10 confidential advisers will still be active, supplemented by two external confidential advisers on call. At the same time, recruitment will start for the two internal confidential advisors who will form the new core of the network in the first quarter of 2027.

In parallel, work is being done on an improved registration structure, a communication process aimed at PhD candidates and managers, and on further strengthening the cooperation with Safe@EUR and the ombudsperson. The coordinator has a central role in this; with 8 hours per week as a formal appointment, but in practice more.

A first evaluation of the new structure will follow in 2027. This evaluation will determine whether expansion to a third internal confidential adviser is desirable and feasible by 2028. The aim is to create a network that is available, independent and professional to anyone at EUR who needs it.

The sharper analyses in this report, for example on the role of managers in labour disputes and bullying, create room to also make targeted recommendations to specific organisational units in the 2026 annual report, as soon as the registration allows for this with sufficient reliability.

The new structure also offers room for a more proactive role for the confidential advisor.

Whereas in the current set-up, confidential counsellors mainly work reactively, at the back end of situations that have already escalated, the new structure can also position them at the front: in prevention, awareness and early detection. That is a substantial broadening of the function.

The network of confidential counsellors is one of the components within EUR's broader care structure, and from that role contributes to a socially safe working environment.