?One in five French employees say they have felt under pressure to compromise their organisation's ethical standards, reveals Institute of Business Ethics' survey

Tuesday 4 December, 2018

More French employees have witnessed misconduct, but there is an improvement in the number who are willing to speak up about it

4th December 2018: The Institute of Business Ethics today publishes a report which takes an in depth look at the results of a survey which asks French employees their views of ethics in their workplace.

It reveals that 20% of French employees say that they have felt pressured to compromise their organisation's ethical standards. This is an increase of +6 percentage points from 2015 (14%) and is higher than the 2018 average (16%) for the eight European countries studied. The figure is even higher for those in managerial positions (26% versus non-managers 16%). The reasons employees cite for the pressure include time pressure (38%); following a boss's orders (30%); having to meet unrealistic business objectives/deadlines (23%) and being under-resourced (23%).

The Ethics at Work: 2018 survey of employees is the only one of its kind covering Europe which provides real insight into employees' views on ethics across all sectors and job roles. This new report by the IBE looks specifically at the data from employees in France and compares it with other countries.

The Survey, first introduced in the UK in 2005, asks employees how they experience ethical dilemmas in their day-to-day working lives. It looks at whether they have witnessed misconduct; whether they have reported it; what stops them. It provides real insight into what supports employees in doing the right thing.

Improvements, but France still lags behind in employee perceptions

Over a third of French employees have witnessed misconduct in the past year (34% vs 30% in 2015), a higher proportion than the European average (30%) . There is, however, an improvement in the number of employees who have raised concerns about it (52% who were aware of legal or ethical violations in 2018 raised concerns, compared to 44% in the same position in 2015), which means it is broadly in line with the European average (54% of those who were aware of legal or ethical violations).

Almost half (46%) of employees in France who were aware of misconduct did not to speak up about it, and only a third of all employees said their organisation provided a confidential means to report it (33%).

Employees in France are the least likely to think their organisation acts responsibly in all its business dealings (58%) - a lower percentage than all other European countries surveyed (including neighbours Switzerland – 80%, Germany 77%, and Spain 66%).

But there are improvements in the growing awareness of the four building blocks of a corporate ethics programmes in France, including having written standards of ethical conduct such as a code of ethics (47% vs 42% in 2015); mechanisms to report misconduct (33% vs 24%); procedures to obtain advice (29% vs 18%) and the provision of ethics training (26% vs 21%).

IBE's Director, Philippa Foster Back CBE says:

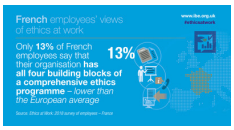
"It is encouraging that employees' awareness continues to rise in France, especially among younger employees. Employees are under more stress to deliver than ever before, and this is increasing the pressure to then cut ethical corners. We see an increase in this pressure across Europe, and these figures should be seen as a warning sign to organisations that they need to be more supportive of their employees when it comes to making ethical decisions."

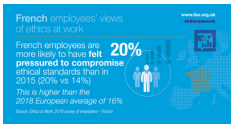
Simone de Colle, professor of business ethics and strategy at IÉSEG School of Management in France, who provided commentary for the new report, comments:

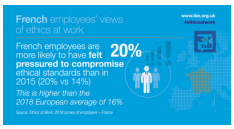
"The findings of this survey in France highlight some encouraging and worrying signals. While more employees are willing to 'speak up' when they see misconduct at work (52% compared to only 44% in 2015), it is concerning to note that 26% of employees in managerial positions have felt pressured to

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compromise their organisation's ethical standards. The survey's insights provide organisations with useful information to better shape current corporate ethics programmes. It also makes them more effective in promoting the development of an ethical business culture, which promotes forms of responsible capitalism, going beyond mere compliance."

#ethicsatwork

ENDS/

For further information or to organise interviews or Op-Eds please contact

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Ethics at Work: 2018 Survey of Employees: France

By Guendalina Dondé Free to download

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About the Ethics at Work survey

The IBE has surveyed British employees since 2005, but given that organisations are increasingly taking an integrated approach at the international level, we have expanded the number of countries included in the research to cover France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and the UK within Europe.

The survey was completed by a total of 6,119 respondents across the eight European countries. It was comprised of a representative sample of about 750 working adults in each country who were aged 18+.

This report presents the findings of public research undertaken by ComRes on behalf of the IBE. ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. The survey was undertaken between 5th and 25th February 2018, and full data tables for 2018 and 2015 are available at www.comresglobal.com

The Institute of Business Ethics

The Institute of Business Ethics, whose purpose is to promote high standards of business behaviour based on ethical values, is an important partner to any business wanting to preserve its long-term reputation by doing business in the right way.

For over 30 years, the IBE has advised organisations on how to strengthen their ethical culture by sharing knowledge and good practice, resulting in relationships with employees and stakeholders that are based on trust.

The IBE is a registered charity funded by corporate and individual subscriptions. www.ibe.org.uk @ibeuk

The author: Guendalina Dondé

Guendalina Dondé is Senior Researcher at the Institute of Business Ethics. She writes and researches on a range of business ethics topics for the IBE.

Before joining the IBE, she collaborated in developing the code of ethics for the Italian Association of Management Consultants and worked for a European CSR Business Network in Brussels. She holds a Master's degree in Business Ethics and CSR from the University of Trento in Italy.

She is the author of the IBE survey report Corporate Ethics Policies and Programmes: 2016 UK and Continental Europe Survey and co-author of the 2017 IBE report Setting the Tone: a New Zealand perspective on Business Ethics, the 2017 TEI & IBE Ethics and Compliance Handbook, the 2016 IBE

Codes of Business Ethics: examples of good practice and of the French and Italian editions of the 2015 IBE survey Ethics at Work: 2015 Survey of Employees.

She is also responsible for reviewing corporate codes of ethics and related policies, benchmarking them against other organisations'.

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