Board of the Centre

89th Session, November 2025

CC 89/3

THIRD ITEM ON THE AGENDA

External evaluation of the training activities of the Social Protection, Governance and Tripartism Programme - Management response

I. Introduction

1. The **Quality** is a central pillar of the Results-based Management Framework underpinning the 2024-25 Programme and Budget of the International Training Centre of the ILO (the Centre). The Centre continuously monitors the quality of its capacity development services along the service cycle and furthermore commissions **external evaluations** to evaluate positive change in the performance of participants after treatment. The main evaluation is annual and covers the training activities of the Centre in the previous calendar year; in addition, the Centre may commission ad hoc evaluations of both training and non-training capacity development activities and including the Master Programmes offered by Turin School of Development[1].

2. **The 2025 external evaluation** of the Centre's training activities covered in this Board paper **covers both face-to-face training and distance learning activities**, mindful of the shift of the organization towards distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic *and* the resurgence of face-to-face training in the 2022-23 biennium (see graph below). The 2025 evaluation thus allows for benchmarking of different learning modalities to assess their relative strengths and weaknesses. The evaluation methodology is aligned with OECD and ILO evaluation principles and allows for the comparison of results across calendar years.

---

[1] For copies of all evaluation reports since 2014 go to https://www.itcilo.org/about/board. The findings of selected evaluations have been synthesized in digital briefs that are accessible via https://www.itcilo.org/resources/digital-briefs

Enrolments training activities (2014-24)
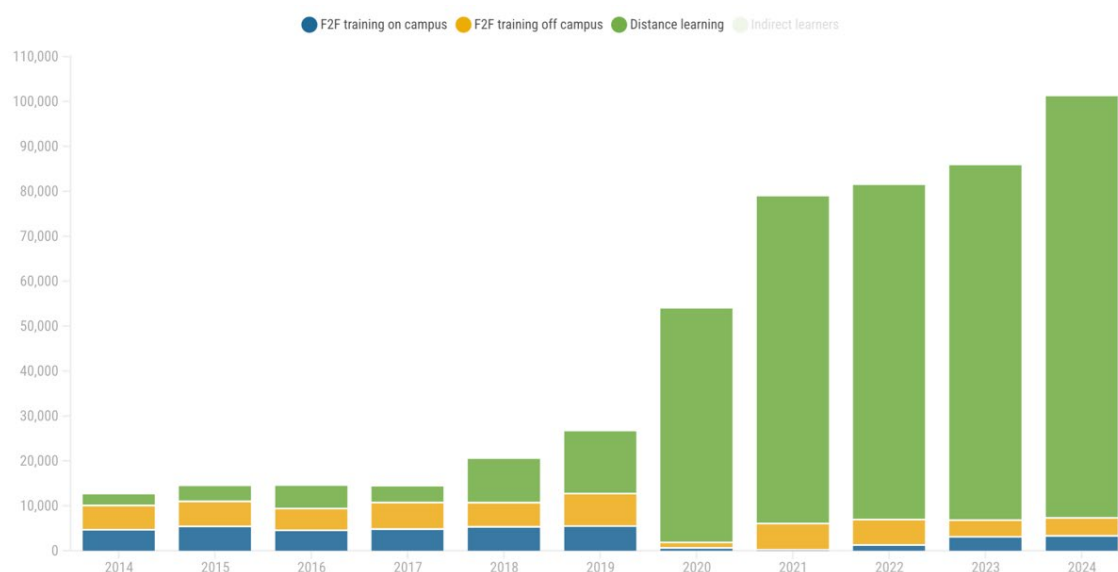
Source: Management of Activities and Participants (MAP), eCampus, Solicomm, external e-learning platforms curated by the Centre. The 2022 and 0223 DL figures includes indirect trainees enrolled in training courses on platforms curated by the Centre.

3. The **purpose of the 2025 evaluation** was to provide the Centre with evidence of the relevance, coherence, validity, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of its training activities related to ILO policy outcome 7 (universal social protection). It also aimed to investigate which training modalities were more impactful in terms of effectiveness and efficiency, and to extrapolate good practices, lessons learned, and recommendations for the improvement or scale-up of relevant training activities. The findings from this evaluation will directly inform future programming decisions for the Centre's training services.

4. The **thematic focus** of the 2025 evaluation was on training activities of the Social Protection, Governance and Tripartism (SPGT) Programme in the Training Department. The evaluation covered a sample of 20 training activities implemented in the course of 2024 and purposefully selected to capture a variety of different training approaches, venues, and methodologies. The chosen activities included a mix of online courses, face-to-face courses, and blended courses, which took place either in the field or at the Turin Campus. These activities were selected to ensure diversity across regions.

5. The evaluation adopted **a mixed-methods design,** combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to generate robust, triangulated evidence on the relevance, coherence, validity of design, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the Social Protection training portfolio. Data sources included document review, quantitative dataset analysis, online survey, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, case studies, and a systematic design review of selected courses. Implementation was guided by internationally recognised evaluation and quality standards, including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee criteria, the United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards for Evaluation, and ISO 29993:2017 on learning services outside formal education. The Centre's quality management model, structured around the Plan–Do–Check–Act cycle, provided the overarching framework for assessing design, delivery, and continuous improvement mechanisms.

6. **Limitations** encountered during the evaluation (June-August) included challenges with stakeholder availability during the holiday period, which resulted in lower than

anticipated focus group discussion turnout and online survey response rates for some sections. Additionally, the anonymity of some data sources prevented individual record linkage, and attrition in pre- post-knowledge acquisition tests limited the generalisability of some findings. These **limitations were addressed** through adaptive strategies, including manual data reconstruction, cross-referencing, triangulation across independent sources, and weighing certain data sources more heavily when necessary.

II. Findings, conclusions and recommendations by the Evaluators

7. **Findings**[2]

[6.1.] The evaluation of the ITCILO's SP training portfolio for 2024 reveals a programme that is strategically relevant, technically robust, and highly valued by its participants and institutional partners. It shows tangible contributions to capacity development at individual, institutional, and, in some cases, policy levels.

[6.2.] **Relevance** (EQ1): The SP training activities demonstrate strong alignment with the strategic priorities of both the ITCILO and the ILO, particularly the ILO's 2022–2025 Strategic Plan and 2024–2025 Programme and Budget. Collaboration with strategic partners like the Social Protection Department of the ILO (SOCPRO) and ensures policy coherence and technical robustness. Participants consistently rated courses as highly relevant to their needs, with 93.6% agreeing or strongly agreeing on this point in the online evaluation survey. However, the lack of systematic documentation for portfolio planning and participant needs assessments was identified as a gap, relying on informal mechanisms and limiting transparency and the Centre's ability to fully tailor content.

[6.3.] **Coherence** (EQ2): The SP training portfolio supports the ILO's social protection agenda by building capacity, facilitating policy coherence, and leveraging partnerships. While Social Dialogue and Tripartism (SDT) is strongly mainstreamed (30% of sampled courses integrating SDT significantly, matching the institutional target), the integration of Gender (10%) and International Labour Standards (ILS) (15%) is less prominent, falling below institutional averages and targets, indicating opportunities for enhancement. Initiatives like the Action Portugal project exemplify strong integration of training with technical assistance for systemic impact.

[6.4.] **Validity of Design** (EQ3): ITCILO has significantly diversified its training modalities, shifting towards digital and blended learning, which accelerated post-2018 and effectively utilising the eCampus platform and integrating the Community of Inquiry (COI) framework. Participants reported high satisfaction with instructional clarity, course structure, and tutor support. While generally well-structured, minor inconsistencies in eCampus instructional design, onboarding practices, and accessibility features were noted. The piloting of hybrid courses is promising but requires further adaptation of internal systems.

[6.5.] **Effectiveness** (EQ4): The evaluation framework (Kirkpatrick model) measures effectiveness across four levels. Certification rates are high (91.8%), and overall participant satisfaction is very high (mean of 4.55 out of 5), meeting the strategic target. However, knowledge acquisition shows variability, with only about half of participants demonstrating measurable improvement between pre- and post-tests, falling short of the 85% strategic target. Knowledge acquisition also declined consistently with age, and a performance gap was observed across participants from different countries of origin. Factors influencing effectiveness include high-quality facilitation, intellectually

---

[2] Quoted from: 2025 external evaluation of ITCILO training activities, p. 7

engaging content, and learner motivation. Delivery mode (online vs. in-person) had no statistically significant impact on effectiveness. Gaps remain in practical application, contextualisation, language accessibility (strong call for other languages than English and French, including Portuguese, Spanish or adequate translation), and post-course interaction.

[6.6.] Effectiveness of Management Arrangements (EQ5): The Centre's training coordination is supported by well-defined roles, quality management systems, and collaborative mechanisms, with participant feedback largely positive regarding organisation and administrative support. However, practical ambiguities in roles, informal knowledge- sharing, ad hoc cross-departmental collaboration, and procedural burdens with support services (Finance, ICTS, FIS/PATU) persist.

[6.7.] **Efficiency** (EQ6): ITCILO's SP training portfolio demonstrates a deliberate balance between cost-efficiency, pedagogical quality, and strategic outreach. Residential courses, particularly in Turin, incur higher costs but generate the strongest Contribution to Fixed Costs (CFC), helping to cross-subsidise lower-margin or tailor-made activities. Online courses are more cost-efficient, especially at scale.

Strategic measures like early publication of courses and leveraging local expertise (e.g., Action Portugal) are perceived to enhance efficiency. While participants and clients generally expressed high satisfaction and perceived value for money, the evaluation identified operational inefficiencies in participant enrolment and internal workflows, with a clear need for greater automation and standardisation. Staff capacity is also reportedly stretched, particularly for tailor-made requests.

[6.8.] **Impact** (EQ7): The SP trainings have driven notable change at individual, organisational, and policy levels. A high proportion of participants (94.4%) reported applying acquired knowledge, with 72.8% providing concrete examples (ITCILO Key Performance Indicator (KPI) 2.C see table 1 below). Evidence shows improvements in job performance, professional growth, and influence on organisational practices, including legislative reforms and improved governance. The trainings also contribute to broader systemic changes by facilitating professional networks and dialogue. However, the absence of systematic post-training follow-up limits the Centre's ability to reinforce learning and document longer-term results.

[6.9.] **Sustainability** (EQ8): Training results are likely to be sustained and scaled, evidenced by long-term application and institutional uptake. Multi-phase programmes and initiatives like Action Portugal support ongoing engagement. The training portfolio is designed to evolve with shifting priorities (e.g., digitalisation, climate change), and innovation funding supports future relevance. Barriers to full realisation of long-term impact include limited contextualisation in some courses, and weak post-training support and mechanisms to follow up on learning application.

8. Conclusions[3]

The evaluation confirms the ITCILO's Social Protection training portfolio is strategically relevant, technically robust, and highly valued by its stakeholders, contributing tangibly to capacity development. While strong performance was observed in relevance, design validity, and management effectiveness, opportunities for improvement include addressing inconsistencies in knowledge acquisition, enhancing practical application and language accessibility, and strengthening the integration of cross-cutting themes (Gender Equality and International Labour Standards (ILS) in particular). Operational

---

[3] [3]Quoted from: 2024 external evaluation of ITCILO training activities, p. 10

efficiencies could be improved through automation of some processes, while formalising long-term post-training follow-up mechanisms will further bolster quality, inclusiveness, and long-term impact, ensuring continued relevance and contribution to global social justice.

9. Recommendations[4]

[9.]1. **Strengthen Systematic Documentation for Pre-training Portfolio Planning and Needs Assessments:** Implement and consistently document formal and informal needs assessments and portfolio planning processes to ensure optimal content tailoring and equitable learning outcomes.

[9.]2. **Incentivise Increased Integration of Gender and ILS:** Further increase systematic integration of gender and ILS across all SP training activities, aiming to meet strategic targets and fully reflect ILO's normative mandate.

[9.]3. **Further Refine and Harmonise eCampus Instructional Design and Adapt Systems for Hybrid Modalities:** Refine eCampus design elements and proactively adapt internal systems to fully support effective and accessible hybrid course delivery, enhancing user experience and scalability.

[9.]4. **Improve Knowledge Acquisition and Address Inclusion Concerns**: Implement targeted pedagogical revisions and differentiated instructional approaches to improve measurable knowledge acquisition, addressing performance disparities related to for example age and country of origin.

[9.]5. **Enhance Practical Application, Contextualisation, and Language Accessibility**: Integrate more real-world simulations, regionally specific case studies (especially from the Global South), invest in high-quality translation and interpretation services, and expand course offerings in key languages beyond English and French.

[9.]6. **Further Activate Cross-Departmental Collaboration and Accelerate Process Automation**: Institutionalise early planning and creative outreach practices, and prioritise modernisation and automation of key administrative processes like enrolment and budgeting, to reduce redundancies and improve scalability.

[9.]7**. Strengthen and Formalise Long-Term Post-Training Follow-up Mechanisms**: Expand systematic post-training support, (re)-activate alumni networks, and establish thematic communities of practice to reinforce learning and ensure sustained application of knowledge in professional and organisational contexts.

III. Management response

10. **The Centre welcomes the findings of the external evaluation.** The evaluation shows that the learning activities of the SPGT Programme have made a significant contribution towards the achievement of the higher-level ILO policy outcomes. The evaluation also provides further evidence that distance learning and face-to-face training are complementary learning modalities, best combined to maximize learning outcomes. The evaluation identifies concrete actions to further refine the Centre's learning services that will be heeded in the spirit of continuous quality improvement. The following paragraphs set down the **management response to the recommendations** made by the evaluator:

---

4 Quoted from: 2024 external evaluation of ITCILO training activities, p. 10

11. **In response to the first recommendation**, the Centre will more consistently document the formal and informal needs assessments and portfolio planning processes at the Plan Stage of the learning servicer cycle. To this end, the Centre will provide Technical Programmes with additional online monitoring tools, including checklists and needs surveys templates.

12. **In response to the second recommendation,** the Centre will continue pushing for the increased integration of cross-cutting ILO policy messages linked to the promotion of Gender Equality and ILS into the syllabus of its open courses while at the same time respecting their thematic focus on other aspects of the ILO Decent Work Agenda like Employment Promotion and Protection.
More specifically, the Centre will further expand the range of free self-guided distance learning modules on GEDI and ILS and makes these modules accessible to participants *across* e-campus course pages. The Centre will furthermore roll out the concept of learning pills piloted first with innovation funds in the 2024-25 biennium that provides participants access via WhatsApp to free digital 'bits and bites' on core ILO policy messages about tripartism and ILS. The Centre will also expand the offering of pre-cast keynote video addresses on core ILO policy messages developed with innovation funds during the 2024-25 biennium. Where applicable, the related keynote speakers can also be booked by Technical Programmes and external clients for live presentations.

13. **In response to the third recommendation,** the Centre will further refine eCampus design elements and proactively adapt internal systems to fully support effective and accessible hybrid course delivery, enhancing user experience and scalability. A main emphasis of this continuous upgrading effort will be on the use of AI tutors for assisted self-guided distance learning.

14. **In response to the fourth recommendation**, the Centre will carry out an in-depth follow-up analysis of the low knowledge acquisition rates registered for several activities in the sample, but being mindful that overall (i.e. looking at the universe of unit-level activities implemented in 2204) the SPGT programme met the related performance target set for the Centre's activities. As part of this exercise, the Centre will further explore the observed performance disparities related to elderly learners and where applicable further differentiate its capacity development activities in response to their segment-specific learning needs and -wants.

15. **In response to the fifth recommendation**, the Centre will integrate more real-world simulations and regionally specific case studies especially from the Global South into its learning activities and step up investments in AI powered high-quality translation and interpretation services.

16. **In response to the sixth recommendation**, the Centre will further incentivize cross-departmental collaboration with the help of the CATALYST initiative and start tracking the share of co-created and co-delivered activities as a key performance indicator in its results-based management framework. Sustainable financial performance of the organization allowing, the Centre will also make an additional allocation to the fellowship fund earmarked for the enrolment of representatives from the core constituency to training activities conducted by SPGT and other Technical Programmes. The Centre will furthermore partly automate its enrolment processes and digitalize its budgeting processes with semi-automated templates.

17. **In response to the seventh recommendation**, the Centre will further strengthen its post-training follow-up services, via its alumni network and drawing on the pioneers' awards scheme established during the 2204.25 biennium. The Centre will train

members of its learning faculty on more consistent follow-up on participants, including through the use of AI assistants.

18. **For further information** on concrete actions in response to the evaluators recommendations refer to the outputs descriptors under outcome 1 (growing outreach) and 2 (improving impact of the **Centre's 2026-27 P&B**. Actions to drive automation and digitalization of the Centre's business processes are captured under outcome 4 (enablers of sustainable institutional performance) of the same document.