



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Executive Board

Two hundred and twelfth session

212 EX/5.IV.A Add.

PARIS, 7 October 2021

Original: English

Item 5 of the revised provisional agenda

FOLLOW-UP TO DECISIONS AND RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND THE GENERAL CONFERENCE AT THEIR PREVIOUS SESSIONS

PART IV

HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES

ADDENDUM

COMMENTS BY THE UNESCO STAFF UNION (STU)

A. Implementation of the Human Resources Management Strategy 2017-2022

Pursuant to Item 9.2.E.7 of the UNESCO Human Resources Manual, the UNESCO Staff Union (STU) submits its comments on the report by the Director-General.

- STU is pleased to know that approximately half of all **external recruitments** during the period 2020-2021 concluded with **the appointment of internal staff**.
- At the same time, we note that the average vacancy time is of **370 days (351 days** for international professional positions), according to IOS audit of UNESCO's recruitment process (document 212 EX/35), with 29% of vacancies taking from one to two years, and 12% taking more than two years!
- According to the IOS audit, one of the reasons for these extremely long delays is "the very large number of applications". STU believes that a more efficient recruitment process would consist of reverting to previous practices and implement again a two-step recruitment process. This would consist of organizing a first round for internal candidates followed by a second round for external candidates where internal talent would not meet the requirements of the position.
- Concerning mobility, STU would like to recall that the implementation of the **new mobility policy** in 2019 failed to respond to the needs of both Member States and staff. The implementation of the second cycle under this policy is therefore being closely monitored. The proposal to be submitted to the General Conference to amend staff regulation 4.4 is in line with



Job: 202103270

IOS recommendations to improve the current mobility policy, increase attractiveness of field positions and provide career development opportunities to staff.

- As for preparing the new cycle of mobility, STU drew the attention of the administration to the low-quality moving services that are currently being contracted by the Organization to move its staff. This should be quickly rectified so that colleagues moving next year can do so with moving services that meet the quality standards expected from an international organization and without having to cover moving expenses with their own savings.
- STU would like to recall rule 57 (c) of chapter 5.3 of UNESCO Human Resource Manual on the evaluation of **candidates to recruitment**, which states that as of 1 January 2021, “in the case of promotions to the P-4 level and above, a staff member on a post subject to geographical mobility will be **required to have completed at least one geographical assignment** for a minimum duration equal to the applicable time in-post”. Rules should be applied to all staff in a fair and transparent way. Applying this rule arbitrarily would send the wrong signal to staff and would not contribute to creating a culture of mobility in the Organization.
- As for the framework for **staff welfare**, STU notes that well-being is increasingly supplanting welfare as a central political goal for social and public policy. In academic social policy, some writers have suggested that a focus on well-being allows us to consider a “fully rounded humanity” whereas welfare focuses on economic utility. STU would like to refer to staff responses to the recent UNESCO Global Staff Survey. Only 50% of staff believe that the Organization cares about their well-being, only 44% feel UNESCO helps staff to achieve a work-life balance and only 37% think they have access to support at work to help them deal with pressure and stress. The survey did not duly address several issues directly related to staff welfare and well-being such as: gender equity, mental health, enabling environment.

As a matter of fact, for men and women workers, their families and communities, healthy workplace initiatives that take into account sex and gender differences can lead to better health and well-being. They can also lead to empowerment through the equitable and meaningful participation of workers in programmes that encourage communication and action and foster support. For employers, such initiatives can result in an improved bottom line in the form of decreased turnover and absenteeism, increased productivity and morale, and lower workers’ compensation costs.

Additionally, when comparing with the benchmark, the responses from the UNESCO staff members were frequently less positive than those provided by staff from the nine benchmark organizations. It is therefore evident that more needs to be done by the Administration for staff welfare. For example, the new, long-awaited flexible working arrangements policy could go into the right direction but is yet to be shared with staff associations. STU continues being available and willing to make contributions to any initiative that may impact positively on the staff well-being.

- Similar to staff welfare, only 51% of the respondents to the UNESCO Global Staff Survey considered they had access to the **training they need to do their job**.
- As for gender parity, STU fully agrees that important progress has been made in UNESCO in terms of gender parity. We notice however that the representation of women continues to be low at P-5 and D levels.
- Finally, concerning a future Human Resources Management Strategy beyond 2022, STU remains fully mobilized to participate in the consultations to prepare a new HR strategy for the Organization.
- **Revised classification policy:** STU still regrets the Director-General’s decision to abolish Staff Rule 102.2 entitled “Compatibility with classification standards”, which allowed each eligible staff member to request the reclassification of his or her post. This decision was taken

against the advice of the staff associations, the Advisory Council on Personnel Policies (ACPP) and Member States. The new post classification policy is not a step forward for UNESCO and its staff members, since the right to request equal pay for equal work is now severely reduced and limited to a specific period of time. The possibility of requesting a post reclassification offered colleagues one last means of advancement in an organization where career development does not exist.

- **Performance management:** STU regrets the abolition of the Reports Board, replaced by the Performance Review Board, that has a much more restricted role, to the detriment of the staff. There are clear signs that in some cases performance reviews are not being used by the local administration as intended. Proper procedures are not followed, deadlines are ignored, and “s.m.a.r.t.” objectives are not set. Moreover, meetings between the supervisor and supervisee to have open discussions towards setting attainable goals compatible with the resources available do not take place, nor do proactive updates occur where improvements are expected. Unfortunately, in these cases the spirit of the rules is ignored, and instead of enabling and allowing the staff to be more productive, engaged, and motivated, there seems to exist a pattern where the performance evaluation has a very negative affect on staff. In those cases, we deplore that competent staff cannot make their full contributions to the organization due to a lack of guidance and because timely feedback is not provided. Moreover, it has a negative impact on staff’s careers and sometimes their well-being is directly affected, as indicated by the elevated number of staff on sick leave, as well as on early retirement for health reasons. The lack of consequences of such behaviour sends the wrong message to the remaining staff. STU hopes that attention will be put on detecting these cases and that appropriate actions are taken.
- **Revised Statutes of Appeals Board:** STU was opposed to the following revisions proposed by ADM/HRM:
 - reduction of the composition of the Appeals Board from five to three members;
 - maintenance of the proviso “as soon as possible” with regard to the Director-General’s response.

STU has therefore noted with satisfaction that the adopted Statutes of the Appeals Board incorporated the essence of its comments, in particular the maintenance of a five-member composition and the obligation to convene a session of the Appeals Board within six months of receiving the Administration's reply.