



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Executive Board

Hundred and ninety-fourth session

194 EX/3 Add.

PARIS, 1 April 2014
Original: French

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE APPLICATION OF RULE 59 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

MAJOR CHANGES TO THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

ADDENDUM

COMMENTS BY THE UNESCO STAFF UNION (STU)

Pursuant to Item 9.2.E of the UNESCO Administrative Manual, the UNESCO Staff Union (STU) submits its comments on these reports by the Director-General.

1. The changes to the organizational structure submitted by the Director-General have raised some serious concerns leading the UNESCO Staff Union (STU) to make a number of remarks in relation to the position of staff and the consequences in terms of the Organization's capacity to deliver the programme.
2. First, despite the Director-General's instructions since July 2013 and repeated calls from STU, reflection on the restructuring of the Organization has not been conducted in consultation with the staff. Given that "officially" any effective restructuring proposal, and therefore post abolitions, could not be carried out before the 37th session of the General Conference, the sectors and bureaux were obliged to draw up their proposals for structures and post abolitions in an exceedingly short period, between 27 November 2013, dispatch date for the instructions to the sectors and bureaux, and 12 December 2013, the deadline for submission of those proposals. Between mid-December 2013 and January 2014, the staff members concerned were notified orally of the proposed post abolitions.
3. Therefore, while the programmatic restructuring must be guided by the list of priorities for the expected results adopted by the Executive Board in July 2013, a large number of proposed post abolitions have not been linked to these priorities. Instead of adhering to established guidelines, arbitrary decisions, based on purely subjective considerations and favouritism, have been taken both at Headquarters and in the field. In its comments on the proposed post abolitions, STU has also reported several disparities between sectors that will lead to very unequal treatment. Thus, posts that are essential to the Organization's mission are being abolished, while others are not, simply as a result of favouritism on the part of certain senior managers.
4. As to the restructuring of the field offices, STU deeply regrets the manner in which the exercise has been carried out. The abolition of posts mainly concerns non-international posts, which means the termination of appointments of mostly lower-grade staff. STU has found that in the same field offices where the posts of local staff were abolished there are a plethora of staff on

service contracts or other precarious contracts performing similar, permanent tasks, some of which are even financed from the regular programme budget. This is why STU has commented on the inconsistencies and contradictions in the proposed field office post abolitions and the arbitrary and inefficient nature of these proposals. Likewise, STU questions the relevance of abolishing General Service (G) posts in certain structures and replacing them with Professional (P) posts while the tasks performed by the G-grade staff remain and must be dealt with by P-grade staff, paid at a higher rate by the Organization. Where are the efficiency gains and cost savings there?

5. In addition, STU has noted a number of unjustified staff movements, including promotions and external and internal recruitment particularly during recent months, before the redeployment exercise. If the exigencies of the service were an “absolute necessity”, staff could have been simply seconded rather than transferred or internally recruited, pending the general staff redeployment exercise following the abolition of posts, that is, if the aim of the general exercise is to strengthen the efficiency and quality of programme delivery by the Secretariat. Moreover, these unjustified movements reduce significantly the redeployment opportunities for staff currently occupying posts identified for abolition.

6. STU deplors the lack of a significant reduction in senior posts (D-1, D-2 and ADG) in the new organizational structure. Thus, while the trend is towards the downgrading of lower-grade posts, especially among the G-category staff, senior positions are generally being maintained at the same grade. Moreover, a number of senior posts are occupied by people who have already passed the age of retirement. Thus, even if the overall cost of staff will be effectively reduced, it will certainly not be achieved through objective streamlining or efficient and equitable management of human resources.

7. STU has also noted a lack of transparency in the presentation of the nature of the posts in the organizational structures contained in document 194 EX/3. Thus, among the posts financed from extrabudgetary funds (EXB), there is no distinction between the posts of permanent staff and Project Appointments (PA) staff, which, according to UNESCO’s rules and regulations, should not perform the functions and tasks of permanent staff but only “specific projects or activities of a time-limited duration”. Thus, the organizational structure submitted to the Executive Board masks a completely different reality: on the one hand, the real number of permanent staff is numerically lower than that submitted to the Executive Board; and on the other hand, there is a growing tendency towards increased precarity for those working in the Organization. This situation jeopardizes the founding principles of the international civil service, namely its independence and integrity, and undermines multilateralism within the Organization.

8. The Organization’s institutional and permanent work is therefore increasingly carried out by contract workers (on PA contracts or consultant contracts, etc.) in breach of UNESCO’s rules and regulations. That is why STU denounces the growing non-rational use of permanent staff. It is unacceptable to STU that existing permanent staff members, recruited on the basis of their high-level skills and experience following a demanding recruitment procedure, be increasingly supplanted in the performance of their daily professional duties by consultants, some of whom are inexperienced, which in any case incurs pointless expenditure that is detrimental to programme delivery. In the context of the financial crisis, the situation is unacceptable and furthermore contributes to the loss of institutional memory, under the guise of a pseudo-rationalization of staff costs. Moreover, recruiting staff on these contracts does not meet the rules on geographical distribution and, *de facto*, favours local staff to the detriment of staff from countries with little or no representation.

9. This situation leads to the discouragement of permanent staff and the voluntary departure of some of them. The number of voluntary separations may therefore show a decrease in the payroll of the Organization and therefore a reduction in staff costs, but this is often the result of a loss of motivation and incurs irreparable losses in terms of continuity of service and competency of the Organization, in addition to the financial cost of the separations (separation packages).

10. Furthermore, STU questions the real willingness of the Administration to rationalize staff costs in order to limit the number of post abolitions. In spite of repeated proposals from STU, it was only on 27 November 2013, with a deadline for applications by staff set for 11 December 2013, that staff members received a proposal for “Flexible Work/Leave arrangements in support of the upcoming staff restructuring plan (FWLA)” concerning special leave without pay, part-time work, job sharing and inter-agency transfers, thereby reducing the possible scope of such a plan.

11. The savings actually made therefore remain to be seen in all respects.

12. STU also regrets the total lack of foresight by the Bureau of Human Resources Management in terms of identifying the training needs of the staff members who are likely to be redeployed. Thus, in the context of the current crisis, in which staff redeployment could require the training of some of the staff members concerned, no training plan has been provided.

13. Lastly, despite repeated calls from STU, the restructuring plan submitted to the Executive Board is incomplete because the structure of the executive and administrative offices is not final and could change depending on the outcome of the EO/AO reform, which is in the process of being finalized. STU considers it unacceptable that such a reform initiated so long ago has not been finalized yet and that despite everything, some sectors have already abolished some EO and AO posts arbitrarily, while others have not yet.

14. All this leads to multi-track and sometimes arbitrary restructuring, whereas better planning and foresight might have avoided and might still avoid irreparable damage to the Organization and its staff.

15. Therefore, in view of the foregoing, STU wishes to express strong reservations on the proposed method for conducting the restructuring because of the consequences it will have, by way of the management of its staff, on the capacity of the Organization to effectively deliver UNESCO’s programme at the service of its Member States.