



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Executive Board

Two hundred and twelfth session

212 EX/5.IV.A Add.2

PARIS, 7 October 2021
Original: French

Item 5 of the 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 2

COMMENTS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL STAFF ASSOCIATION OF UNESCO (ISAU)

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

Pursuant to item 9.2.7 of the UNESCO Human Resources Manual, the International Staff Association of UNESCO (ISAU) submits its comments on human resources issues (document 212 EX/5.IV.A).

1. ISAU regrets that, in a document on the human resources management strategy, the Bureau of Human Resources Management (ADM/HRM) has not mentioned career development or staff motivation.

Mobility

2. ISAU hopes that the mobility exercise announced will be transparent and that all the recommendations made in the audit by the Internal Oversight Service (IOS) will be applied. ISAU will be all the more vigilant on this point since it has had to ask ADM/HRM to intervene to put an end to attempts to circumvent the mobility exercise by means of transfers outside the mobility period, even though the exercise has already begun. ISAU recalls that this exercise must be carried out transparently and fairly in order to gain the support of the staff. In this regard, the document refers to the Global Staff Survey to say that staff consider mobility to be an advantage, but it does not sufficiently emphasize that the same survey has demonstrated a decline in confidence in the mobility exercise. We reiterate that such an exercise absolutely must be based on the principles of efficiency, competence and justice, bearing in mind that the staff and the associations representing them have expertise in this area, which management would be well advised to take into account.



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3. ISAU is fully in favour of allowing a staff member to apply for a more senior post in the context of mobility. We therefore support the proposed revision of Staff Regulation 4.4.2, which is as much a matter of fairness as of efficiency. We also see this reform as a step towards a return to internal recruitment. It should be recalled that the elimination of the phase of internal advertisement of posts has not been formally evaluated as such. While no one disputes the objective of speeding up recruitment procedures, it must be stressed that it has had an adverse impact on staff motivation.

Recruitment and outreach

4. We note with satisfaction that the recruitment of former project appointments (PAs) from January 2020 to June 2021 concerns 20% of the total recruitment of posts (geographical and non-geographical) at the professional and director levels. ISAU would like to see efforts to regularize PAs and temporary staff, in particular workers who have been with the Organization for more than five years. In that connection, in order to promote transparency and communication in this area, we would have appreciated a document on PAs similar to the one provided in respect of non-staff personnel (document 212 EX/5.IV.B).

5. We cannot give credence to ADM/HRM's assertion that the Young Professionals Programme (YPP) is a "proven measure to improve geographical representation". The figures clearly show that there has been no improvement in geographical distribution and that the programme has not achieved its intended objective.

6. It should be noted, again in the light of figures on geographical distribution, that outreach measures have had a limited effect. The geographical imbalances are not related to the number of applications submitted but to the fact that ADM/HRM does not have sufficient control over the recruitment process. With 75% of recruitment from normally represented or over-represented countries, it is clear that ADM/HRM does not exercise strict control over the recruitment process.

7. The excessive delays in recruitment, as pointed out in the IOS audit report, continue to concern us, especially since the measures implemented so far seem to have failed. We are still far from the 130-day target. The instances of non-compliance revealed by the audit (panel members did not sign off on the appointment recommendations, important information was missing from recruitment files) are further proof of ADM/HRM's failure and lack of involvement and follow-up.

8. In this respect, the audit report clearly points to ADM/HRM's shortcomings in terms of planning, management and even involvement in recruitment. ISAU has been making this observation for many years and, while we are pleased to see it highlighted by IOS, we expect it to be followed by action. As we have repeatedly denounced, recruitment is in the hands of the sectors and ADM/HRM simply records the process. It is essential that recruitment be better managed at the level of ADM/HRM.

9. On the whole, ISAU supports the IOS recommendations, except those with regard to PAs, and reiterates its request that their recruitment be better managed by ADM/HRM and subject to the Appointment Review Board (ARB) and the principle of geographical distribution.

10. With regard to geographical distribution, IOS's finding that nine out of 20 geographical posts were recruited from over-represented countries undermines the hope of improving geographical distribution within the Organization. These figures corroborate our analysis of management's reports on staff movements, which show that from January 2020 to June 2021, 38% of appointments are of Group I nationals. We therefore welcome the IOS recommendation to submit decisions to appoint candidates from over-represented Member States to the Director-General for final decision.

11. The IOS recommendations are in line with our commitment to fighting the lack of transparency in the recruitment process and to improving the process' transparency. In this regard, we cannot help but be shocked upon reading paragraph 36 of the audit report, which states: "in some of the cases from our sample, important information relating to recruitment files kept in HRM was missing". This kind of observation once again demonstrates ADM/HRM's insufficient involvement in

recruitment; if ADM/HRM does not have all the important information, should we thus not conclude that its role is not important? From this point of view, the improvements promised by the adoption of the SAP SuccessFactors software system have not been achieved. Such a tool can only be successful if ADM/HRM plays a truly key role in recruitment; this requires ADM/HRM to have the necessary information.

12. Improving ADM/HRM's control over recruitment from the outset would help to reassure all the stakeholders that these processes are transparent. It would also help to dispel the legitimate suspicion that certain posts are earmarked, or even reserved, and that their descriptions are tailored accordingly.

Geographical distribution

13. ISAU has submitted its comments in a separate document (212 EX/5.IV.C.I Add.).

Staff learning and development

14. With regard to staff learning and development, we note once again that ADM/HRM has not considered it important to link learning and training with career development, despite our repeated requests to do so.

Internship programme

15. ISAU is in favour of the principle of paying interns. This is both because payment would be a fair reward for substantial work carried out for the Organization, and because such payment could significantly help nationals of non- and under-represented countries to take on internships at UNESCO. At its 211th session, the Board requested the Director-General "to present to it a paid internship programme scenario for at least the next two biennia and mechanisms for financing it". We would have liked to see proposals at this session.

Performance management

16. ISAU wishes to reiterate its profound disagreement with the new performance management policy, and particularly with the abolition of the Review Panel and the Reports Board. The new system, as part of which the Performance Review Board excludes the staff member concerned from his/her hearing, violates staff rights. This policy gives too much power to the supervisor, especially in cases where there is no second-level supervisor, which can lead to abuses. This shows the extent to which the 360° evaluation called for by ISAU is more relevant than ever; the assessment of supervisors' ability to evaluate their staff needs to be made possible.

17. ADM/HRM had given its assurance that a committee headed by the official responsible for legal matters within ADM/HRM would see to it that there were no abuses and that the policy could change if necessary. It would be advisable to assess this new policy and take appropriate corrective action. ISAU has concrete proposals regarding the matter and remains ready to work with ADM/HRM.

Staff welfare

18. We welcome the efforts made by management with regard to staff welfare, particularly the measures taken to facilitate teleworking during the health crisis and the vaccination campaign implemented at Headquarters and in the field. We also appreciate the flexibility shown by management with regard to the carry-over of annual leave and the provision of a room for sports activities. We note the development of an occupational health and safety policy, in which we wish to be involved prior to its launch. It should be taken into account that the Global Staff Survey indicated an 8% decrease in respondents who deem positive the measures taken to ensure staff safety at work.

Global Staff Survey

19. There has been a clear drop in confidence with regard to mobility issues. The survey results raise questions in respect of the following:

- the 6% decrease in the number of respondents who believe that mobility is beneficial for career development;
- the 5% decrease in the number of respondents who believe that mobility is useful for UNESCO' s effectiveness;
- the 4% decrease in the number of respondents willing to take up a different post in their corresponding offices/sectors/divisions in the next five years;
- the 5% decrease in the number of respondents willing to switch duty stations in the next five years.

20. In addition, the document mentions a “significant improvement” in communication and information-sharing, learning and development, performance management, and staff well-being, but much still remains to be done, as listed below.

- Communication: We note that only 44% of respondents feel that information is circulated openly at UNESCO.
- Learning and development: The staff satisfaction rate is only 45%. Less than half of the respondents feel that they have the materials necessary for improving their skills and knowledge with a view to a future career. Less than half of the respondents feel that UNESCO provides good learning and development opportunities.
- Performance management: The survey largely corroborates what we have been repeatedly telling management and the Member States. According to the survey, only 37% of respondents find UNESCO' s performance evaluation system effective. That only one third of staff members consider the performance management system effective is cause for concern. It should make us reflect extensively not only on the management mechanisms in place, but also on management' s relationship with staff.