



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific  
and Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

# 42 C

**General Conference**  
42nd session, Paris 2023

42 C/45 Add.2  
7 November 2023  
Original: French

Item 10.2 of the agenda

## STAFF SALARIES, ALLOWANCES AND BENEFITS

### ADDENDUM 2

#### COMMENTS BY THE INTERNATIONAL STAFF ASSOCIATION OF UNESCO (ISAU)

##### OUTLINE

In accordance with Item 9.2.7 of the UNESCO Human Resources Manual, the International Staff Association of UNESCO (ISAU) submits its comments on staff salaries, allowances and benefits (document 42 C/45).



Job: 202303978

## **Introduction**

1. We commend the efforts made by the Administration in producing this detailed document on staff salaries, allowances and benefits. We have also taken into account the information and explanations contained in Annexes I and II to the document, concerning the bodies and authorities responsible for defining the various allowances and benefits and the methodology for setting salaries.

2. Staff are often unfamiliar with the details of these processes, even though they are directly concerned. Colleagues often request explanations and clarifications from us on this subject. We, of course, remain committed to our role in this area, but we are convinced that better information should be provided by the Administration on these issues, both through its communications with staff and the training courses it organizes. This would help to quell the sentiment of incomprehension and frustration often caused, for instance, by a lack of familiarity with the methods used to calculate pay scales.

## **Regarding parental leave**

3. ISAU continues to support the Administration's consideration and application of the recommendations and decisions adopted by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), including the new parental leave framework.

4. ISAU was informed by the Bureau of Human Resources Management (HRM), at a meeting in February this year, of the intention to introduce a new framework for parental leave; we have not, however, received a draft of the new policy to date. We look forward to this project and will communicate our observations and comments as appropriate, while bearing in mind the ultimate objective of guaranteeing optimum conditions of service for UNESCO staff.

5. We fully agree with the principle of contributing to "the promotion of equal care giving". Employment conditions need to evolve to reflect new priorities and mindsets and meet staff needs and expectations. Reforms of this kind are essential not only to maintain the Organization's position as a competitive employer, but also to combat hidden injustices, unconscious prejudice and all types of discrimination. We would therefore like to reiterate our support for the significant changes introduced by the new parental leave framework and, in particular, the provisions on paternity leave. As previously mentioned, this will not only help to balance gender roles, but also to combat gender-based prejudice and discrimination at the time of recruitment.

6. In this respect, we believe that it would be useful for the new policy to be accompanied by greater awareness-building of gender equality among supervisors and other staff in charge of recruitment. We believe that more needs to be done in this area, as demonstrated, for example, by the abnormally high numbers of women holding affiliate personnel contracts, particularly in the field (see [document 217 EX/4.IV.A Add.2 paragraph 7](#)).

7. Finally, with regard to the financial implications of the new parental leave policy, the Administration reiterates the possibility that UNESCO "may not be able to fully fund replacements of staff on parental leave" and that it will therefore "report back [...] on the actual implementation of this new policy". Is this statement still true after the return of the United States of America to the Organization and the positive impact this will have on its budget? At the 216th session of the Executive Board, we had suggested that provisional means be considered to overcome this difficulty, rather than directly alluding to the inability to implement the proposed changes. We are therefore surprised that the Administration does not seem to be fully addressing the issue, since it is proposing a parental leave budget which it anticipates could be insufficient.

### **Regarding the existence and role of administrative tribunals**

8. It goes without saying that access to an independent administrative tribunal, albeit as a last resort, is a right of paramount importance for staff members. As we have already highlighted, it is regrettable that affiliate personnel do not enjoy the same access to both internal and external justice mechanisms.

9. ISAU wishes to express its unwavering support for the right of access to the International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal (ILOAT), whose role in protecting all staff rights is essential. We can only encourage informal exchanges and sustained communication between the United Nations Administrative Tribunal (UNAT) and ILOAT, with a view to avoiding significant differences in the jurisprudence of the two tribunals. These differences are likely to lead, and indeed have already led to disparities and inequities in the terms and conditions of service for staff of the United Nations and other international organizations applying the common system.

10. It is true that the functioning of ILOAT is not without its problems and difficulties, most notably the abnormally long delays in processes brought before the Tribunal. However, while it is primarily up to the Tribunal to remedy this problem, UNESCO also has a role to play. It must strive to reduce the number of cases brought before the Tribunal by dealing with human resources problems at their source and by encouraging amicable settlements and, above all, the early resolution of disputes. This would reduce not only the exorbitant costs that UNESCO has to pay, but also the stress that staff have to endure when appealing to ILOAT. We have already pointed out, and continue to denounce, the fact that the Administration tends to prefer spending Member States' money on judgment costs rather than requiring its supervisors to properly manage the staff the Organization places under their responsibility.

11. In this respect, we await with great interest the Administration's report to be submitted next year which will review, *inter alia*, the ILOAT judgements concerning UNESCO, the measures taken to incorporate the principles from these judgments in the administrative procedures, and the costs incurred by the Organization in this context ([215 EX/Decision 5.IV.A, paragraph 7](#)).

12. It is clear that being brought before the Tribunal is, to some extent, a failure of the justice system and of the system for resolving internal disputes. Ultimately, a political choice must be made: that of rejecting conflict resolution through lengthy and costly litigation, and opting instead for efficient human resources management from the moment of recruitment through to the adoption of administrative decisions following the recommendations made by the Appeals Board.

### **Regarding salaries and allowances**

13. ISAU takes note of the information and explanations provided by the Administration in its document and wishes to recall that a global staff survey is currently being carried out by ICSC, regarding all United Nations common system staff and all the benefits and allowances to which they are entitled. The results of the survey, which will be presented to the General Assembly of the United Nations, will be used in the next benefits review, and will thus have a significant impact on the conditions of service of both current and future UNESCO staff. ISAU supports the conduct of this survey, which will enable staff to express their points of view on their conditions of service, and Member States to understand the difficulties staff are facing. We will be following its progress closely, and hope that the results will be seriously and thoroughly taken into account.

14. With regard to the dependent child and secondary dependants' allowances, we would like to relay the concerns and requests of colleagues, including those in the field, who would like, and even demand, greater support from the Administration in this area. This support would not only need to be financial, but also to include truly flexible working arrangements tailored to the needs of these families.

15. Lastly, a final comment is in order regarding staff costs and the impact that changes in remuneration and benefits have had in this respect. The Administration explained that the increase in overall staff costs had been “accommodated through the careful monitoring and use of vacancy savings”. However, we must alert Member States and the Administration to the incurred risks. These “vacancy savings” do not mean that the tasks associated with these posts have been discontinued, but that they have been entrusted to affiliate personnel. These savings are therefore misleading, as they are often synonymous with the long-term appointment of affiliate personnel, who are employed under precarious contracts. Practices of this nature therefore need to be re-examined. Abusive uses of precarious contracts should no longer be counted as savings. Instead, we should combat these unfair situations and rectify them. Staff should no longer be seen as adjustment variables; instead, they should truly be recognized as the Organization’s “most critical resource”.