

Human resources: annual report

Report by the Secretariat

INTRODUCTION

1. This report provides an update on the implementation of the new global mobility scheme and on some key human resources policies, such as the internal justice system reform and United Nations common system issues, that require amendments to the Staff Rules. In addition, it analyses some trends in the WHO workforce. It does not address the question of human resources management in the context of emergency response, which is covered in document EB138/23. Workforce data for the period from 1 January to 31 July 2015 are available on the WHO website.¹

UPDATE ON THE WHO GLOBAL MOBILITY SCHEME

2. In line with the second pillar of the human resources strategy, “retaining talent: career management”, a mobility framework has been developed. In order to ensure that skills and competencies are in the right place at the right time, this framework is fully integrated into the workforce planning process and supports a career management strategy. All staff members are expected to be mobile and to undertake a variety of assignments over the course of their long-term employment at WHO, in order to build their professional skills and enhance their career prospects. As a first step towards mobility across the Organization and the strengthening of country office capacity, a managed geographical mobility scheme has been designed. This mobility scheme applies to staff members in the professional and higher categories whose positions are designated as rotational. Geographical mobility is expected to foster technical excellence across the three levels of the Organization and to strengthen the support provided to Member States at the country level, including in emergency response.

3. Work has advanced towards the implementation of this new scheme – which is scheduled for early 2016 – following the support given by the governing bodies and the subsequent adoption of amendments to the Staff Rules² and Staff Regulations,³ which provide a legal basis for the staffing of international rotational positions through annual mobility exercises. An implementation plan providing

¹ See the document entitled “Human resources: update, Workforce data”, at: <http://www.who.int/about/finances-accountability/budget/en/> (accessed on 20 October 2015).

² See resolution EB136.R14 (2015).

³ See resolution WHA68.17 (2015).

details of the seven main activities¹ that need to be accomplished has been drafted. The present report provides an overview of these activities at the time of drafting; the Board will be provided with a further update, through its Programme, Budget and Administration Committee, during its session in January 2016.

4. The geographical mobility policy is expected to be promulgated by the Director-General in early 2016 after further discussions by the Global Staff/Management Council in October and endorsement by the Global Policy Group in November. Throughout the process, a communication campaign will be conducted to provide information to staff and management on the implementation of the policy.

5. Geographical mobility will be introduced in a phased manner, starting with a three-year voluntary phase during 2016–2018. The policy will be evaluated after the first two years of its voluntary phase implementation. The lessons learned from the voluntary phase will inform the Organization on how to implement the policy effectively on a mandatory basis and the policy will be adjusted accordingly. Thereafter, based on the experience gained during the first three years of implementation and without prejudice to the transitional measures and possible waivers, those staff members occupying rotational positions whose current assignment has exceeded the standard duration of assignment will be required to move.

6. The managed mobility scheme provides for a distinction between international positions that are rotational and those that are non-rotational. The incumbents of rotational positions will have to move upon completion of the standard duration of assignment applicable to their duty station, while the incumbents of non-rotational positions will be able to stay in the same position and in the same duty station without time limit.² The premise is that all fixed-term positions in the professional or higher categories are rotational – as is the case with international positions at the country-office level – unless they meet the following criteria:

- (a) The functions of the position are so highly unique and specialized that no similar or equivalent positions exist in other duty stations across the Organization at the same grade.
- (b) The functions are so highly unique that it would be extremely costly and inefficient for the Organization to train and find a new specialized replacement.
- (c) Although the position is an international position, the functions and skills of the position are linked to the specific context of the duty station.
- (d) It is in the interests of the Organization to exceptionally make this position non-rotational (for example, to strengthen organizational capacity).

7. The governance system, whereby representatives from the regions and headquarters contribute in a transparent manner to placement decisions in the annual mobility exercise, is being designed.

¹ These activities are: the identification of non-rotational positions; the definition of the governance of the scheme, including the role of the Global Mobility Committee; the identification of positions to be advertised in the first mobility compendium; the definition of placement procedures; the development of staff support measures; the finalization and promulgation of the geographical mobility policy; and the development of a communication campaign.

² However, after 10 years at the same duty station, in order to rise to higher-level positions, they will have to apply and be selected for ad hoc vacancies in other duty stations.

Staff representatives will participate in the system, and the Department of Human Resources Management will provide support. The Director-General, in consultation with the Regional Directors, will appoint the members of the Global Mobility Committee and will be the ultimate decision-maker in respect of placement decisions.

8. Work is being undertaken to design the placement procedure, criteria and timelines to be applied under the mobility scheme. The general principle is that placements of staff will involve lateral moves. Promotions will be granted only through ad hoc vacancies and open competitive selection processes. Geographical mobility will be one of the eligibility criteria for such ad hoc vacancies, thus rewarding staff members who have gained experience in various duty stations and at different levels of the Organization. Support measures are being developed, including career support and information on living and working conditions in WHO duty stations. Financial support will be provided to staff members who move from one duty station to another in accordance with the United Nations common system.

9. A policy of this nature entails a major cultural change and impact on the Organization for many years. It has inherent risks that need to be clearly identified and mitigated. To succeed, the engagement of senior and middle management is crucial, in order to address staff concerns; allocation of the appropriate level of resources is also indispensable.

10. It is expected that the proposed managed mobility scheme will improve cross-fertilization and moves among regions and between headquarters and regions. Current data show that while there are already a significant number of moves each year, these moves mainly take place within the same major office (see workforce data, Table 12).¹ Furthermore, the data for 2014 show that, while headquarters has 49.4% of the total number of professional and higher category posts, only 1.8% of headquarters staff moved to another duty station that year. The period from 1 January to 31 July 2015 displays the same trend (see workforce data, Table 13).¹ Using the current baselines, one of the human resources-related indicators in the Programme budget 2016–2017 is the doubling of the proportion of international staff changing duty station, including an increase of moves outside the same major offices.

11. Ultimately, the managed mobility scheme should bring two significant benefits: improved staff performance, competence and efficiency resulting from the varied professional experience gained at the three levels of the Organization and, in consequence, strengthened support to Member States at the country level; and better alignment of the staffing structure with WHO's evolving priorities and funding capacity. After a few years of implementation, the policy will be evaluated.

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

12. The number of women in the professional and higher categories has increased steadily over the past 10 years, rising from 556 to 847. As at 31 July 2015, of the 2022 long-term staff members in the professional and higher categories, 847 (41.9%) were women. This represents a further step towards gender parity since December 2014, when 41.7% of staff members in these categories were women. Nevertheless, further efforts are required and the Organization is committed to improving gender balance and geographical representation when retiring staff members are replaced. This commitment is reflected in the human resources-related indicators in the Programme budget 2016–2017, where a

¹ See the document entitled "Human resources: update, Workforce data" at: <http://www.who.int/about/finances-accountability/budget/en/> (accessed on 20 October 2015).

target of 55:45 has been set as the overall male–female ratio in the professional and higher categories. While there is gender balance in the senior leadership of WHO, data show that further improvement is needed with respect to other senior positions: 33% of the incumbents of positions with grades P5–D2 and 35% of the heads of WHO country offices are women (data for 2014 and September 2015 respectively).

13. A total of 32% of WHO Member States continue to be either unrepresented or under-represented in the international professional staff category (in which positions are counted for geographical representation). The target in the Programme budget 2016–2017 is to reduce this number to 28%. As at 31 July 2015, 18% of the international professional staff came from under-represented countries (see workforce data, Tables 4a–f).¹ The goal is to increase the intake of candidates from unrepresented or under-represented countries (A category), which will then result in an increase in the percentage of staff from countries in categories B1 and B2 (within their range).

14. It should be noted that this situation is not unique to WHO; it is common to most of the organizations of the United Nations system. The following actions have been undertaken in WHO to improve gender parity and diversity, particularly in senior positions:

- Assistant Directors-General have gender and diversity improvement among their performance indicators in their accountability compacts;
- under the new electronic Performance Management and Development System, managers are requested to record their annual achievements towards gender and diversity;
- a weekly email listing all the vacancies for international positions across WHO is sent to Geneva’s permanent missions with the aim that they will circulate this weekly list of vacancies broadly in their countries;
- through the annual succession planning exercise, the attention of senior managers is drawn to the opportunity for gender and diversity improvement offered by the replacement of retiring staff;
- umbrella agreements have been concluded with four search firms to assist headquarters and regional offices in the identification of female candidates and candidates from unrepresented and under-represented countries who are qualified for senior positions;
- measures to promote an enabling work environment, such as the introduction of occasional teleworking arrangements, the recognition of different types of leave, the promotion of a respectful workplace, and the introduction of “onboarding” (entry) and exit questionnaires, are being put in place;
- quarterly information on the demographics of the different clusters, including for temporary appointments and non-staff contracts, is provided to selection panels.

¹ See the document entitled “Human resources: update, Workforce data” at: <http://www.who.int/about/finances-accountability/budget/en/> (accessed on 20 October 2015).

STAFF COSTS

15. As at 31 July 2015, WHO had a total of 7529 staff members, comprising 6229 long-term appointees and 1300 staff on temporary appointment. Of the long-term staff, 2222 (32.5%) were in the professional and higher categories, 946 (15.2%) were in the national professional officer category and 3261 (52.3%) were in the general service category. The number of staff members holding long-term appointments has remained stable (–4 staff) compared with the number reported in the staffing profile as at 31 December 2014.¹ The 1300 temporary appointees as at 31 July 2015 represent an increase of 224 staff or +20.8% compared with the number shown in the staffing profile as at 31 December 2014.² Temporary staff constitute 17.3% of the total workforce. From 1 January to 31 July 2015, staff and other personnel costs amounted to US\$ 496.8 million or 37% of the Organization's total expenditure of US\$ 1332.7 million.

16. A review of the use of non-staff contracts (agreements for performance of work, consultants and special services agreements) is being conducted in order to ensure that such contracts are being used in a harmonized and proper manner across the Organization. The hiring of other non-staff personnel is also being explored: an umbrella agreement between WHO and the United Nations Volunteers secretariat, for instance, would ensure that outreach to and use of volunteers were harmonized across the Organization. As at 31 July 2015, the numbers of non-staff contracts, in terms of full-time equivalents, were: 185 agreements for performance of work; 270 consultants; and 4994 special services agreements. From 1 January to 31 July 2015, the cost of individual non-staff contractual services amounted to nearly US\$ 89.4 million, or 15% of the total expenditure of the Organization.

AMENDMENTS TO THE STAFF RULES

17. A series of amendments to the Staff Rules are being submitted to the Executive Board in January 2016 for confirmation.³ Additional amendments will be submitted to the Board at its upcoming meetings in respect of two major subject areas, namely the improvement of the internal justice system and alignment with the United Nations common system.

Internal justice system

18. Formal and informal mechanisms for resolving employment-related disputes have long been in existence at WHO. However, it has been recognized that greater emphasis should be placed on preventing disputes at all organizational levels. A review was conducted in 2014 by an external panel of experts jointly commissioned by the administration and staff representatives. Arising from the review were recommendations that placed emphasis on preventing disputes and on the shared responsibility for maintaining a respectful workplace, and which were submitted to the Director-General. Amendments to the Staff Rules in support of the informal resolution of grievances are submitted in document EB138/54.

19. Consultations are taking place across the Organization with management and staff representatives to design a system for the formal resolution of grievances to be applied consistently

¹ See document A68/44.

² The increase of the number of temporary appointments during the first semester of 2015 can mainly be explained by the need for a temporary staff workforce for the Ebola outbreak response.

³ See document EB138/54.

across the Organization. In accordance with the recommendations of the independent experts, the new internal justice system will provide for the institutionalization of an administrative review process. The completion of such a process will be a prerequisite before filing an appeal to the Global Board of Appeal. Both the administrative review and the appeal process will be managed at the global level, ensuring that all staff members, regardless of where they are working, have equal access to justice. Transitional measures for cases filed before the new system is put in place and improvements to the handling of harassment cases are also under discussion. If consultations with stakeholders result in consensus and are completed shortly after the meeting of the Global Staff/Management Council in October 2015, then amendments to the Staff Rules will be submitted to the Executive Board in January 2016. However, should the consultations take longer, the necessary amendments to the Staff Rules will be submitted to the Executive Board in May 2016.

United Nations common system

20. There are two items on the agenda of the Seventieth session of the United Nations General Assembly (2015) that may affect human resources management at WHO: one concerns the recommendation by the International Civil Service Commission that the implementation date for raising the mandatory age of separation to 65 years for staff recruited before 1 January 2014 be no later than 1 January 2017; and the other concerns the Commission's review of the compensation package for international staff.¹

21. Since 1 January 2014, the mandatory age of separation of new staff members joining the United Nations common system has been 65 years. In December 2014, the United Nations General Assembly agreed to the principle that the mandatory age of separation would be raised to 65 years for staff recruited before 1 January 2014, taking into account the acquired rights of staff, and requested the International Civil Service Commission to revert to the General Assembly with an implementation date, after consultations with all the organizations of the United Nations common system.² WHO, like most United Nations organizations, informed the Commission that it had embarked on a programme of reform that is reshaping its highly specialized workforce. The natural attrition of staff is seen as an opportunity to better align WHO's staffing structure with the new priorities of the Organization, in particular with regard to emergency response and at the country level, and to improve gender balance and geographical representation. WHO also stressed that the Commission's recommendation, by including a reference to acquired rights, leaves to staff members the choice of their retirement date, which will be detrimental to a proper succession planning. Nonetheless, the Commission recommended 1 January 2017 as the implementation date. Once the General Assembly has decided on the date of implementation, WHO will determine how to implement the change and the necessary amendments to the Staff Rules will be presented to the Executive Board.

22. The International Civil Service Commission has submitted recommendations to the General Assembly¹ with respect to individual elements of the current compensation package for international staff, including those linked to the salary scale, dependency and family benefits, the education grant, mobility and hardship benefits, and relocation and repatriation-related payments. The Commission proposes transitional measures in the event that current staff are adversely affected by the changes in their remuneration. When, at the request of the General Assembly, the Commission embarked on the review of the compensation package for international staff in 2013, the expectation was that the

¹ See document EB138/52.

² See United Nations General Assembly resolution 69/251 on the United Nations common system: report of the International Civil Service Commission, adopted by the General Assembly on 29 December 2014.

Commission would aim to design a remuneration system that would be fit for purpose (adequate for each organization's programmatic focus and organizational model); would provide for cost-effectiveness and cost-predictability, equity, simplification, support for diversity, motivation and performance; and would support mobility and presence in hazardous and hardship duty stations. It will become clear from the deliberations of the General Assembly at its seventieth session whether this aim has been achieved. Changes in the remuneration package will require amendments to the Staff Rules. When such amendments are submitted to the Executive Board, the policy, system and financial implications will be highlighted.

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

23. The Board is invited to note the report.

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